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ABSTRACT

This sourcebook contains background readings for teachers and suggests learning activities and resources for teaching about aging at the secondary level. During the lifetimes of present students, the population 65 and over will grow from 11% to 20%. Most children now in school will live well beyond their 70th birthday. There is, therefore, a critical need to prepare this longest-lived generation for life in an older society, to foster more positive attitudes toward older people, and to increase understanding of aging and related issues. The sourcebook is comprised of seven chapters, each of which treats a particular topic. These are: what it means to grow old, attitudes about aging, aging in other times and places, the economics of aging, work and retirement, politics and aging, and longevity and the future. The format of each chapter is essentially the same, containing the following components relating to each topic: a narrative review of current information, a chapter summary in the form of myths and facts, a set of suggested learning activities, a glossary, and recommended readings for further study. Suggested learning activities are many and varied and include having students conduct oral history interviews with an elderly person, select and discuss quotations about aging, analyze advertisements in terms of images of age groups, and analyze statistics. The sourcebook concludes with an extensive bibliography of additional resources including books, articles, curriculum materials, audiovisual resources, government publications, and organizational resources. (Author/RM)

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EDUCATION FOR AGING

A TEACHER'S SOURCEBOOK

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TEACHING AND LEARNING ABOUT AGING
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INTRODUCTION

Between the time this sentence is written and this same time tomorrow, approximately 3600 Americans over the age of sixty-five will die and 5000 more will celebrate their sixty-fifth birthday. In short, tomorrow there will be about 1400 more "senior citizens" than today. By this time next month, there will be enough "new elderly" to populate a large town; by the end of the year, there will be enough to fill a city the size of Birmingham, Alabama, or El Paso, Texas.

In 1900, about the time that the grandparents of today's high school students were born, life expectancy was only forty-seven years. Only one out of twenty-five people was over the age of sixty-five. Since that time, the population of the United States has tripled, but the population of people over sixty-five has grown seven times--equivalent to the combined population of our twenty-one smallest states. In 1900, living a long life was something special. Today it is something that most young people can look forward to.

This is a new thing for America, of which we are just starting to become aware. Just a few years ago, the public spotlight was on youth. It was the generation of Dr. Spock, campus unrest, student protest and the counterculture. More recently, the focus of the media seems to be shifting toward aging and the elderly. A spate of popular books have appeard, including one best seller which captured a Pulitzer Prize, Robert Butler's *Why Survive? Being Old in America*. Millions of movie fans have turned out to see films featuring elderly people, such as "Harry and Tonto," "The Sunshine Boys" and "Going in Style." Both public and private television networks have run special programs about the activities, needs and concerns of older Americans. Major features and cover articles are appearing in popular weekly magazines, with some devoting special issues to the topic. Daily newspapers carry features about senior citizens and regular columns written for or about older people.

The focus is not only on the elderly but on the process of aging itself. Millions of readers have searched the pages of Gail Sheehy's best seller, *Passages: Predictable Crises of Adult Life*, to find clues to what is happening and will happen to them as they pass through the adult phases of life. Still further attention is being given to such age-related issues as the family crisis. While much attention is being given to life "crises" or the "plight" of the elderly, many publications also highlight the potential and promise of long life.

Public awareness is being translated into public policy. During the last few years, a host of laws, programs and services has been established on the federal, state and local levels to

meet the needs of older Americans. Organizations representing the interests of older citizens have proliferated, and their memberships are climbing rapidly. Colleges and universities are instituting or expanding offerings in gerontology and related fields. In 1977, Cornell University established the first chair of geriatric medicine in the United States, a move long overdue. As our society moves into the twenty-first century, with perhaps one fifth of its population aged sixty or above, geriatricians may be as common as pediatricians are today.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CURRICULUM

The longevity revolution and the changing age mix of society have become major social issues of our time. Like all major social issues, aging is now finding its way into the school curriculum, both through public pressure to teach the subject and through far-sighted teachers who recognize the need for it. Educators may grow weary of the constant demands to add new subject matter to already overcrowded curricula, but this pressure helps keep schools relevant to the world outside the classroom.

Education for aging is not just another popular whim or passing fad. It is a long-neglected subject which we can neglect no longer. The following are just a few of the important reasons this topic belongs in the classroom.

1. YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY HAVE A GREATER PROMISE OF LONG LIFE THAN ANY PREVIOUS GENERATION. A boy born in 1980 can expect to live to the age of sixty-nine, a girl to the age of seventy-seven. Keeping in mind that these estimates are for average life expectancy, they imply that millions of children with above average chances will live into their eighties and nineties and beyond.

2. THERE IS CLEAR EVIDENCE THAT TODAY'S YOUNG PEOPLE, ON THE WHOLE, HAVE A NEGATIVE VIEW OF AGING AND VERY STEREOTYPED IDEAS ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS TO BE OLD. Teenagers may look forward to the time when they enjoy certain privileges of adulthood and establish their own independence and identity, but they definitely do not look forward to being middle-aged or old. In this they share the general cultural bias of our society in favor of youth and youthfulness.

3. THE CHANGING AGE MIX OF THE POPULATION WITH CONSTANTLY LARGER PROPORTIONS OF OLDER PEOPLE IS RAISING MAJOR SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUES FOR WHICH LONG-RANGE POLICIES AND PROGRAMS MUST BE ESTABLISHED. Today's young people are tomorrow's voters. The decisions they make on tough age-related issues will be strongly influenced by the attitudes and values developed during their formative years. To a large extent, they will help to shape the kind of social environment in which all of us will live out the remainder of our lives.

4. WHILE AGING IS A UNIVERSAL AND, SO FAR, IRREVERSIBLE PROCESS, IT IS ALSO ONE OVER WHICH THE INDIVIDUAL CAN HAVE CONSIDERABLE CONTROL. Successful aging is no accident. It requires the development of lifelong habits of body and mind that begin early in life. People living in advanced old age today demonstrate that it can be a good time of life, even the best time of life, if one is prepared. Two thousand years ago, Seneca wrote, "Let us cherish and love old age, for it is full of pleasure, *if one knows how to use it.*" More recently, someone said, "There are three kinds of people--those who watch things happen, those who make things happen, and those who wonder what happened."

5. YOUNG PEOPLE WILL LEARN ABOUT AGING WHETHER WE TEACH THEM OR NOT, BUT WHAT THEY LEARN MAY BE FALSE AND HARMFUL. It is no secret that most learning takes place outside the process of formal education. The advantage of the classroom is that we have the opportunity to organize information and learning experiences in such a way that there is a better opportunity to direct the mind of the learner toward a fuller understanding and a more balanced conception of reality. Of course, there is always the danger that this advantage can be abused, and this can happen in education about aging as it can with any subject. But if we leave learning about aging to the disorganized and often biased input of the media, in the form of jokes, cartoons, and popular myths, we are doing a vast disservice to young people who need to know the truth.

6. LEARNING ABOUT AGING HAS ALREADY BEEN DEMONSTRATED TO BE A VERY STIMULATING EXPERIENCE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY WHEN IT HAS BROUGHT STUDENTS INTO DIRECT CONTACT WITH OLDER PEOPLE. This is not to suggest that a teacher who asks a class, "What would you like to do today?" is likely to have students responding, "Let's learn about aging." If asked directly, most students exhibit about as much interest in learning about aging as they do in learning how to conjugate Latin verbs. But we all have an intrinsic interest in our own future, and it is not hard to capitalize on this to engage a student's interest. In classrooms across the country, teachers pioneering in education about aging have found that, once involved in the subject, young people find the topic both relevant and intriguing. In spite of all assumptions about the so-called "generation gap," experiments bringing young and old together to learn have proved particularly exciting and educationally rewarding.

YOUTH CONFERENCES WITH OLDER AMERICANS

In February 1975, an imaginative pilot conference was organized in Santa Barbara, California, by the Student Board of Education which consists of elected student representatives from all the high schools in the district. The conference brought together fifty

teenagers and fifty senior citizens for a day of discussion about issues affecting older Americans. Topics included the economics of aging, housing, transportation, family relationships and recreation. It was such a successful project that it became the prototype for a nationwide bicentennial program of "Youth Conferences With Older Americans" supported by the National Retired Teachers Association and American Association of Retired Persons (NRTA/AARP) in cooperation with the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP).

No one knows exactly how many conferences were conducted over the following year, but about 14,000 requests were received for the free organizational handbooks which were made available to any group wishing to organize such a conference. Conference reports to the NRTA/AARP were a voluntary matter, but scores of reports were received from urban, suburban and rural schools across the nation. The comments from young and old alike were overwhelmingly positive in terms of the effects of the conferences on the perceptions, attitudes and information that each generation gained about the other. The following are typical of the comments received:

> *"It changed our views of each other. It gave people a chance to know others of other age groups."* Student, Santa Barbara, California.
>
> *"I've gained knowledge that I otherwise would have missed completely. I was surprised to see that our interests and thoughts were so close together."* Student, Marion, North Carolina.
>
> *"What I liked most was the feeling of togetherness."* Senior citizen, Thorndike, Maine.
>
> *"It wasn't frightening as I thought it might be. We didn't see any hippies."* Senior citizen, Tempe, Arizona.
>
> *"Personally, I found that age is not a discriminating factor between relations, but rather a positive factor. I discovered that I had much in common with the older people and their problems and attitudes were very much like my own."* Student, Chesapeake, Virginia.
>
> *"Why can't we do this every week?"* Senior Citizen, Iowa City, Iowa.
>
> *"This was super. Let's do it again tomorrow!"* Student, Oakland, California.

The conferences have been so successful that what began as a bicentennial program now seems, for some schools, to be shaping into an annual event. With the continuing support of NRTA/AARP and NASSP, Youth Conferences With Older Americans was adopted as a national project of the National Association of Student Councils

for the 1977-78 school year.

A meeting was held in Santa Barbara in November 1976 to review the first year of the program, and, in a sense, this publication is an outgrowth of the Youth Conference project. The Santa Barbara meeting brought together representatives of NRTA/AARP, NASSP, the National Humanities Faculty and teachers from some of the schools which had sponsored conferences. It was their unanimous opinion that the program was of great educational value and should continue, especially as a means of developing awareness of the concerns of youth and elders and beginning to build a bridge of understanding between the generations. At the same time, it was also felt that there was a need for more substantial and long-term opportunities for students to learn about aging. One result was the decision of NRTA/AARP to undertake the preparation of this sourcebook for teachers who wish to either introduce the topic of aging to their students or expand upon what they are already doing in this field.

PLAN OF THE SOURCEBOOK

There are always certain problems that confront a teacher when venturing into a new subject area. First, a teacher must become familiar with the body of existing knowledge about the subject. Second, he or she must identify usable resources for the classroom. Planning is the third task--establishing goals, organizing learning activities, and evaluating what has been accomplished. This sourcebook has been designed to assist busy teachers with all these problems, but not to do the job for them.

The philosophy underlying the format of this book is that the best teaching takes place when teachers who are "turned on" to a subject prepare their own lesson plans and organize their own materials rather than trying to follow someone else's scheme about the "right way" to get the job done. Thus the sourcebook is not a curriculum or course guide and contains no detailed lesson plans. Nor is the sourcebook meant to serve as a student textbook, although it has been written with students very much in mind.

The book has been organized so that each chapter deals with a single significant topic within the field of aging and may be used independently of other chapters as a self-contained resource for that topic. The format of each chapter is essentially the same, containing the following components relating to the topic:

- review of current information
- chapter summary in the form of myths and facts
- set of suggested activities for teaching and learning
- brief glossary of useful terms for students to know, and
- recommended readings for further study.

At the end of the sourcebook, an extensive bibliography of

additional resources includes books, articles, curriculum materials, audiovisual resources, government publications, and organizational resources.

The sourcebook will not make anyone into an "instant expert." This text was subjected to critical review by competent specialists in the fields of gerontology and education prior to publication. Every effort has been made to assure that the information is accurate and reflects good teaching methods.

The statistical data used extensively utilize the most up-to-date information available at the time of writing. However, current statistics can often be like shifting sand. They can change rapidly, and sometimes radically, and teachers should use this kind of information cautiously. Much of this data can be updated by checking the annual publication of the U. S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract*, or any almanac or yearbook that relies on Census Bureau data.

GOALS AND EVALUATION

Communicating accurate information and useful concepts about aging should be one major objective. But beyond that, and perhaps even more important, should be the goal of helping the student to develop a positive personal framework of attitudes and values. How people think and feel about aging is at least as important as what they know. Their attitudes and values, more than what they "know" in a cognitive sense, will determine how people react to their elders, what positions they take on age-related issues, and how they grow older themselves.

One college professor who conducted a conscientiously planned course on aging did some pre- and post-testing of his students. When the course was completed, he was delighted to find that his students had gained appreciably in their knowledge of the subject. He was also chagrined to find that, in spite of what they learned, their attitudes had not changed at all. Undoubtedly, the personal human element was lacking. Studying people in sterile, abstract terms is like learning to be a botanist without ever examining a plant.

The positive results of the Youth Conferences With Older Americans demonstrate how much attitudes can be favorably affected when young and old are brought together and have the chance to interact. Next to personal contact, the best alternative is to provide vicarious experience through personal accounts, case studies, and brief vignettes of individuals to whom the student can relate. The sourcebook makes liberal use of such items, and it is recommended that the teacher do the same. Other ways of bringing a human dimension to the topic

are through short stories, novels, biographies and films. The bibliography at the end of the book includes these kinds of sources.

Eventually the question arises, "Where does the topic of aging belong in the curriculum?" The answer is easy. Ideally, it belongs at all grade levels and across a broad range of subject areas. Certainly it fits into the biological sciences, the social studies and the humanities, as well as in subjects like health, career education and home economics. It will probably be some time before that ideal is within reach of most school systems. Meanwhile, individual teachers who recognize the importance of the topic should begin by weaving the topic into whatever they teach. In considering possible placement in the curriculum, the following list of suggested goals may be of help.

1. To develop the concept of aging as a dynamic life-long process controlled by genetic inheritance, social factors, and personal lifestyle.

2. To develop awareness that each individual ages differently and that every person has many "ages" of which chronological age is only one.

3. To recognize that medical science has produced a "longevity revolution" which has increased, and is increasing, life expectancy.

4. To become aware of the changing age mix of the population and its implications for the future of society and the individual.

5. To become aware of the special social, economic and political problems common to older people today and to recognize that these problems can be overcome.

6. To understand that good health, happiness and prosperity are possible at all stages of life, including old age.

7. To develop an appreciation for the activities and accomplishments of older people and the important resource that they represent for society.

8. To foster positive attitudes toward one's own future as an aging person.

9. To become sensitive to myths and stereotypes about aging and age groups and aware of the means by which they are transmitted in our culture.

10. To develop an appreciation of the ability of people, throughout their lives, to continue to learn and develop intellectually.

11. To understand that the statuses and roles of people at various ages vary from one culture to another.

12. To understand that the situation of elders in society today is largely the product of historical forces and currents of social change.

13. To learn how to prepare for old age physically, psychologically and economically in order to take advantage of the opportunity presented by the promise of long life.

14. To consider alternatives for the future which might offer people of all ages better chances for a life of security and dignity.

Once a unit of study about aging has been completed, how can the teacher know whether anything significant was accomplished? One good way is to do some pre-testing and post-testing to measure informational gain and changes in attitude. Forms of post-testing will depend on the specific content and topics of study, but they should be related directly to the original goals and objectives. Some of the value clarification activities included in the sourcebook could be used in this fashion to measure changes in attitude. Objective tests are a quick and easy way to check on information gains, but more complex and subjective questions will be required for evaluating the learner's insight into the subject. Frequently this can be done by taking a general goal and turning it into a question. For example, using the suggested goals set forth earlier in this chapter, questions like the following may be used.

1. What factors help to explain why, at a given age, some people become "old" while others remain "young"? (Goals 1 and 2)

2. Explain what is meant by the "longevity revolution" and why it has occurred in our own time. (Goal 3)

3. Describe the changes taking place in the age mix of the population and comment on ways in which this might affect your own future. (Goal 4)

4. What special problems does contemporary society pose for older people? Describe three reforms that you think would help to overcome those problems. (Goal 5)

5. What are some things you expect to be able to do in retirement that you cannot do now? Explain why and describe some things you can do while young to make possible the things you want to do in retirement. (Goals 6, 8, and 13)

6. Of the elderly persons we have studied, who do you think represents the most desirable model for "old age"? Explain why. (Goals 7 and 10)

7. Describe three erroneous ideas you held about aging or old people before we began this study of aging and comment on how you might have acquired those ideas. (Goal 9)

8. Compare the status and role of the elderly in our society with the situation of elderly people in [name another society]. How can the differences be explained in terms of the cultural patterns of the two societies? (Goal 11)

9. How do our history and patterns of social change help to explain the situation of older people in American society today? (Goal 12)

10. Describe three major reform efforts on behalf of older Americans that have either been contemplated or are under way. For each one, tell why you think that reform is well-advised or ill-advised in the long run. (Goal 14)

Even when the evaluations seem to indicate success, there is no assurance that what we teach will mean that our students will act differently. Like everything else in education, teaching about this topic carries with it a lot of assumptions about the relationship between what is learned in school and behavior beyond the classroom walls. Ideally, the way to measure the success of teaching for aging would be to observe the behavior of our students as they go through life. How do they relate to older people? As citizens, what positions do they take on age-related issues? How do they grow old themselves? While we cannot know for certain how much we have accomplished, certainly education for aging is one of the major challenges confronting educators today. Hopefully teachers will find that this source-book helps them to meet that challenge.

ONE. GROWING OLDER: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

"Perhaps the best is always cumulative."--Walt Whitman

In the late nineteenth century, Otto von Bismarck instituted for Germany the first broad national program of social legislation. This was the beginning of what in modern times has come to be called the "welfare state." Among the beneficiaries of Bismarck's bold new programs were the elderly who, after a lifetime of labor, would be entitled to the reward of a government pension. But in order for the system to work it was necessary to identify a specific age at which a citizen would be entitled to these benefits. Setting the age at seventy placed no great strain on the system, since so few people lived that long. Later the qualifying age for benefits was reduced to sixty-five.

As other nations patterned their own programs after the model of Germany, they too established age sixty-five as the time when people would be entitled to special benefits. Our own United States Government followed suit when the Social Security program was finally established in 1935, and many private businesses followed the example of government in setting up private pension plans. One unfortunate outgrowth of this has been that many people have come to think of age sixty-five as the time when a person suddenly becomes "old."

But when does a person really become old? Is it when the candles are blown out on the sixty-fifth birthday cake? Is it when a person stares into a mirror at a wrinkled face with gray hair and wonders who is staring back? Is it when the boss says, "We're sorry, but we won't be needing you any longer"? Is it when joints begin to stiffen and one doesn't get around much anymore? Is it when people notice that many of their old friends have passed away? According to the late Groucho Marx, who lived to be eighty-four, "Anyone can get old. All you have to do is live long enough." But is this really true? Does everyone who lives a long life become "old"?

Recently a poll was conducted to determine at what age people in the United States consider someone to be old. The results were interesting for two reasons. First, while about half those interviewed indicated that people become old at a certain age, there was no general agreement on what that age is. Some said a person is old by age forty; others said it does not happen until one reaches eighty or more. Most of those who set a certain age put it somewhere between fifty and seventy, although people interviewed from that age group usually did not consider

themselves to be old. Second, the poll showed that about half the public did not assign any specific age, but considered oldness to depend on other factors such as health, employment or the ability to produce children.[1]

Not only is there no agreement among the public about what constitutes old age, but even gerontologists who specialize in the study of aging have no uniform definition. They do agree that aging is a highly individual and lifelong process that is affected by biological, psychological and social forces. Gerontologists are far more interested in understanding what happens to people as they age than they are in defining old age.

The process of aging is actually a combination of processes which are happening simultaneously but are not synchronized. In other words, while we all grow older every day, at any given time we have many "ages" in addition to our chronological age. Gerontologists are able to tell us a good deal about what *may* happen to us physically, psychologically and socially as we age, but they are not able to predict what *will* happen at any specific age or the sequence in which signs of aging will appear. Each person ages differently because no two people have exactly the same genetic inheritance, personal lifestyle or experiences in life, and all of these strongly influence the way in which we grow older.

BIOLOGICAL AGING

Humans, like other living creatures, have a normal life span which may vary somewhat from one individual to another but is fairly constant for the species as a whole. House flies die at about ninety days, dogs usually at twelve to fourteen years, and horses around forty to fifty years. For humans, the Biblical "three score and ten" is about average, although there are a few places in the world where unusually large numbers of centenarians are reported. Among these are the Caucasus region of the Soviet Union, the Hunza Valley of Pakistan and Vilacabamba in Ecuador. Except in societies where there are high rates of death for women giving birth, or where female infanticide is practised, females generally live longer than males.

Medical advances in recent years have extended life expectancy by saving the lives of people, giving them a better chance of living out their potential life span. But, in spite of considerable research now under way, nothing actually increases the human life span itself. Experiments have been carried out which retarded the aging process of animals under laboratory conditions, and the research may lead eventually to longer life spans for humans. On the frontier or fringe of medical research, depending on your viewpoint, there are some researchers who believe that aging is a process of physical deterioration which can be overcome

if enough human and financial resources are committed to the task of finding out what causes it.

Research supports theories which point toward some sort of aging mechanism or "body clock" that is built into the genetic code and automatically begins the aging process when we reach a certain biological age. No correlation has been found between age and death rate below the age of thirty, but past that age the probability of death doubles every eight years. Therefore, it is assumed that at about age thirty we begin the degenerative process leading to death.[2]

There is considerable disagreement on what actually causes this "body clock" to begin "ticking". The mechanism may be tripped by a cellular process, a glandular process, a function of the brain or by some other procedure not yet recognized. It has even been suggested that a combination of factors may be linked together in a sort of fail-safe device so that, if one mechanism fails to function, another will take over to ensure the death of the individual but the survival of the species.[3]

As people approach the end of their life spans, they may experience biological deterioration in a variety of ways, including any of the following:

1. Skin becoming thin, transparent and wrinkled
2. Hair thinnning and turning to gray or white
3. Reflexes slowing down and reaction time increasing
4. Senses of hearing, vision, touch and taste declining
5. Joints stiffening and spine compressing, producing shortening or bent posture
6. Kidneys functioning less efficiently
7. Blood vessels becoming less elastic and blood circulation slowing down
8. Bruises more easily acquired and lasting longer
9. Bones breaking more easily and healing more slowly
10. Ability to withstand disease declining and illnesses lasting longer.

While any of the above characteristics may accompany old age, there is no way of predicting which will occur for any specific individual at any particular age or in any particular sequence or combination. It is no more possible to accurately predict the pattern and time of aging than it is to predict what problems an automobile may develop at a certain age or just how many miles it will run before problems arise. With the human body, as with a complicated piece of machinery, much depends on how the machine is maintained and used. Proper diet, regular exercise, sufficient rest and other basic habits of good health have much to do with how long the body will remain young.

The fact that chronological age alone does not make one old is well illustrated in the case of Sam Corwin, as described by his son, Norman.

3

Case 1, Sam Corwin

"My father is a late-blooming celebrity. He will be 100 in December, and each year beginning with his ninety-fifth birthday, a growing society of nonagenarian-watchers in Winthrop, Massachusetts, a shore town north of Boston, has celebrated his birthday with a big party. One of these affairs attracted three hundred people, young and old, and included speeches, presentations, picture-taking and dancing.

"The thing that makes my father conspicuous among our citizens of seniority is that he insists on living alone, cooks his own meals, gets up at five every morning, maintains an active correspondence and keeps track of the birthdays and anniversaries of friends, relatives, his barber, the postman, members of the lodge and almost everybody he has met more than once, plus scores of doctors whom he has consulted in a full life of hypochondria.

"He not only remembers the dates but also punctually sends out greeting cards, most of which are illustrated with collages he assembles himself.

"My father defies every rule and maxim of longevity. He is small, has looked frail for the past sixty years, eats like a sparrow, and used to smoke malevolently odoriferous cigars (the aroma even clung to his letters). To this day, he puts away upward of a pint of sherry daily.

"But the greatest anomaly is in his appearance...He has kept most of his hair, which is still dark except for a strand of white no wider than a stalk of asparagus. Medical men show him off to their colleagues. 'How old,' they ask, 'would you say this man is?'"[4]

The potential of the body for retaining its vigor if well-maintained was dramatically demonstrated by the noted television performer, Jack LaLanne, who for years taught millions of television viewers how to keep in shape through regular exercise and diet. He celebrated his sixty-second birthday by swimming handcuffed and shackled for one mile across Long Beach Harbor towing thirteen boats loaded with seventy-six YMCA youth. At the end of his one hour and twenty-six minute swim, a cardiologist checked his pulse rate and found it to be an even seventy-six.

Admittedly Jack LaLanne's performance was exceptional, almost unbelievable, but there is nothing unusual about elderly people remaining healthy and living full and active lives, especially if this has been part of their life style all along. A few examples

of other active oldsters (all taken from the mid-1970s) should be sufficient to underscore the point.

Like Jack LaLanne, George McColloch of Syracuse, New York, has an unusual way of celebrating his birthday. A former newspaper reporter and urban planner, George began parachuting as a hobby in 1954 and has since logged more than seven hundred and fifty jumps. Each year, on his birthday, he makes a skydive and free falls at least one second for each year of his life before opening his parachute. During the bicentennial he celebrated his seventy-first birthday by leaping from an airplane at 17,760 feet and free falling for ninety seconds before pulling the rip cord.

A visitor to the studios of Madame Alexandra Baldina-Dosloff in southern California would find this ninety-one-year old woman still carrying on her regular routine of teaching ballet. During ninety-minute classes with no rest periods, she works as hard as her students. Once a prima ballerina with the Bolshoi Ballet, Madame Alexandra has been teaching ballet since 1945.

Bernice Tillson, age sixty-eight, was the oldest member of a group that bicycled over 4,500 miles to Williamsburg, Virginia in a three-month trip. Mrs. Tillson is a former teacher of physical education and dance who served as an elementary teacher in Seattle, Washington, for fifteen years before her retirement.

Dr. John Smith, of Roswell, New Mexico, at age ninety-two may be the oldest active teacher in the nation. He teaches mathematics and physics at Eastern New Mexico University. In his spare time, he also teaches in the community high school equivalency program and donates this salary to a scholarship fund for needy students.

Marian Hart learned to fly in 1945 and since then has flown more than five thousand hours. In 1975, at the age of eighty-three, she made a solo trans-Atlantic flight in a single-engine Beechcraft Bonanza.

Plennie L. Wingo can be found in the Guiness Book of Records, and his wax replica stands in Ripley's Believe It or Not Museum in San Francisco. He is the world champion backward walker, and he won that title in the early 1930s by walking backwards for 8,000 miles from Santa Monica, California, to Istanbul, Turkey. (The mileage did not include crossing the Atlantic on a freighter.) In 1976, Mr. Wingo, at age eighty-one, could again be seen walking backward along the highway wearing his special glasses with rear view mirrors. This time his trip was shorter--only four hundred miles from San Francisco to Santa Monica.

None of these people are "typical" elders, but thousands of cases are on record of people who have accomplished such feats in spite of their age. Obviously, chronological age and biological processes are not, in themselves, sufficient to explain what causes people to grow old. Social gerontologists have some theories of their own about what causes some people to age while others remain young.

DISENGAGEMENT THEORY

One popular social theory of aging is the principle of disengagement. Disengagement means that society withdraws from the individual as the individual gives up certain roles performed in society. For example, a mother gives up an important role when her children mature and leave home, whereupon she may enter into a psychological phase of aging popularly known as the "empty nest" syndrome. A classic example of disengagement is retirement. It may come about because society no longer needs or wants the person's labor, or simply because the person no longer needs or wants to work. If the individual withdraws from a work role willingly, the transition to retirement may be accomplished easily and without ill effects. If, on the other hand, the person is forced out of work, resentment and frustration may result in serious psychological damage. Even those who voluntarily retire often find that retirement is not what it is "cracked up to be" and desire to return to work only to find that society no longer wants them. At this point, the retiree suddenly begins to feel "old," regardless of physical condition. What can happen to people's self-image and mental health when retirement is forced upon them is illustrated in the case of Jacob Jensen.

Case 2. Jacob Jensen

Jacob Jensen (a fictitious name invented by his psychiatrist) was, by almost anyone's standards, a happy and successful man. He was the second-highest-paid executive in the company where he had started as a stock boy, right there in the same town, some thirty-seven years ago. He had a lovely wife, lovely children and grandchildren, plenty of money and excellent health, and he was a respected figure in his community. Now suddenly, as he approached sixty, his board chairman had given him a stark choice: early retirement or transfer to South America.

Jensen had never given a thought to retirement. There had always seemed plenty of time to get ready for that distant event. The quiet confrontation with the chairman of the board had so unnerved him, however, that he soon found himself in the office of Dr. Herbert Klemme, at the Menninger Foundation, for psychiatric counseling. Klemme,

recognizing that Jensen was in serious emotional trouble, advised his employers that either of the alternatives they were proposing would be psychologically disastrous. The company relented and gave Jensen a lesser--though still important--job, and two years to prepare for retirement.

Even under these revised circumstances the patient got worse instead of better. Nine months later, writing Jensen's case history, Dr. Klemme summarized, "Mr. Jensen is...agitatedly seeking release from the pain he is experiencing. Because of the severity of his distress, I referred him to the very competent psychiatric facilities available in his local community. He is severely depressed and, at this writing, suicide is a definite possibility... In my opinion, he is also a prime candidate for a severe debilitating physical illness: stroke, acute coronary heart disease, cancer..."

Do many people, in real life, commit suicide for such reasons...? Yes, they unfortunately do. A decade ago, Dr. Sidney Cobb, of the University of Michigan (now at Brown University), kept track for two years of one hundred automobile workers who had been laid off from their jobs. Their suicide rate was thirty times the rate that would normally be expected. They were, moreover, afflicted with a considerably higher than average incidence of nearly all major diseases. These were younger men than Jensen and their unemployment was only temporary, though it may have seemed like forever to them, and the emotional effects were equally profound.

Case histories such as Jensen's are all too common.[5]

The author of the above account is careful to point out that, while such cases as these are common, they are not typical. Studies show that most retirees are satisfied with their situation and that in many cases a person's health, both mental and physical, improves. A successful adjustment depends a great deal on how the retiree prepares for retirement and then uses all the time that suddenly becomes available.

ACTIVITY THEORY

The pattern among older people of trying to remain active and useful is the basis for another social theory of aging, the activity theory. According to this idea, people resist old age as long as they can. Both society and the individual tend to measure age in terms of ability to live like middle-aged adults. Thus, as age advances, people try to maintain active lives and provide for their own needs. A very common comment of elderly

people is, "I don't want to be a burden," When forced out of certain adult roles, people adopt new roles in order to remain functional, useful and independent. Several studies have been done showing that most people in their sixties and seventies do not regard themselves as old and resent being considered old by others. As average longevity increases, people remain active for a longer period of time. Thus people in their sixties today are generally much more active than their counterparts of a generation ago.

One way to remain active beyond retirement is to begin a second career, possibly on a part-time basis. This was the answer for Clifford Harran, whose job as a school crossing guard helps him to remain young.

Case 3. Clifford Harran

"You'll never get rich on a job like this, but if you like kids, as I do, the rewards are great."

This is how Clifford H. Harran sums up his job as a school crossing guard in Groton, Connecticut. Harran retired a few years ago after a long career with an oil company. But for a fellow who led an active life (he's a former semi-professional athlete), watching television and reading all day "just wasn't my cup of tea."

Harran learned that the Police Department was looking for school crossing guards. "That sounded like just the job for me," he recalls. His family includes three children, four grandchildren, and a great grandson.

Being a crossing guard is more than the name implies, "We're like mother hens," says Harran with a grin. His post is near a big apartment complex. In addition to getting the youngsters safely across the street, he often has to point them toward the correct building so they don't get lost or confused. He's also called on to button sweaters, tie shoelaces, stop fights (not always between the boys), and dry tears when a mother fails to show up on time to collect her children.

One day a youngster solemnly confided to Harran, "I hope I die before I get to school. They're going to stick some needle in me and I don't want it." Harran did his best to calm the boy, but felt he hadn't been too successful. But as the boy was hurrying home for lunch, he stopped long enough to show the crossing guard his bandage. "You were right, Mr. Harran," the boy shouted excitedly. "It didn't hurt much!"

Many of the children, Harran says, show a high degree of responsibility. One afternoon after school one little girl wouldn't leave until her mother came. She even refused to go home with two teachers, because "my mommie always told me never to ride with strangers."

Harran's love for the children is returned a hundred-fold when on holidays many of the children give him little presents. "You just can't imagine how touching it is when a youngster comes up to me and says, 'This is for you, Mr. Harran, because you're so nice," then asks me to bend down for a great big hug."[6]

CONTINUITY THEORY

A third social theory of aging is continuity, which holds that with advancing age people simply become more like themselves. They continue to exhibit the same traits, habits and attitudes that have characterized their lifestyle and personality all along. The person who has always been physically active will continue to work and exercise. People who have always been creative or have enjoyed intellectual activities will go on painting, reading, listening to good music or doing whatever they have done in the past. Those who have never known what to do with spare time and have spent countless hours staring at a television screen, will continue to while away their hours doing more of the same and in the process will grow old faster. According to the theory of continuity, people adjust to their age in a variety of ways, but their patterns of adjustment are largely determined by their life experience. The continuity theory is summed up in the old adage, "what we are, we are fast becoming." This theory that older people's habits, attitudes and life style are the product of their life patterns in earlier years is exemplified by the popular historians, Will and Mary Durant.

Case 4. Will and Mary Durant

Los Angeles, November 5, 1975--High on a hillside above Hollywood, in a brown mansion grown musty with age, Will Durant and his child bride, Ariel [Mary], have finished their life work and passion.

Today is the ninetieth birthday of the historian, and this week also marks the official publication of the Durants' newest work, *The Age of Napoleon*, Volume 11 in their massive collaboration called *The Story of Civilization*.

There will be no Volume 12.

"The ego is willing," Mr. Durant remarked as he worked the rocker in his study the other day, "but the machine cannot go on. It's the last thing a man will admit, that his mind ages."

Of course, Will Durant has been grumbling for the last quarter of a century that he has run out of time in his race to produce a prodigious undertaking: the chronicling of 6,000 years of history in the "Civilization" series...

In the early 1950s--when his history was barely out of the Middle Ages but he himself stood at the threshold of old age--he confessed he would trade all his wordly goods for ten more years of life and the opportunity to portray the Renaissance and glimpse the Reformation.

"The imminence of senility," he announced in 1954, "makes it advisable to plan an end of the series with a seventh volume."

But the words flowed uninterrupted, millions of words, all drafted originally in longhand on a green writing board laid across the arms of his favorite rocker, as the Pulitzer Prize-winning husband and wife team plunged through epochs and brought their history within sight of the twentieth century...

Their work has taken them around the world several times, including ten trips to Europe. Now they plan to go as tourists, not as historians.

"We're not taking any pencil and paper with us this time," insisted Mrs. Durant. "Every time we went before, this man was dedicated to a program of research that he would not break. Our work was our pleasure. But this time we can take the luxury of seeing something for pure enjoyment without taking notes."

"This time," she continued, and her eyes lighted up, "maybe we'll even go to the spas. I feel a need for some healing waters!"

"She is seventy-seven, and I consider that a young age," remarked Mr. Durant, "but she says she feels the years more than I do."

"I've lived with him for sixty-two years, and I still don't have his sense of balance and taste."

...the couple finds refuge in their reading, immersing themselves in the literature of the nineteenth century,

a pastime that occasionally encourages thoughts about a new project.

"I get fascinated about the age of Flaubert," Mr. Durant said at one point, mouthing the words as if they were a working title, "All the genius of that period... what a great age of literature."

But Mrs. Durant rebuked him for even permitting such vagrant thoughts. "Remember the spas, Will. This time we're going to the spas! No pencils and papers, right!"

The historian smiled gently at his own mania. "But if we go to the spa at Carlsbad, for instance, I'd start looking around and thinking, now where is that park where Goethe and Beethoven used to walk together. I'd still be a hopeless slave to history."

And the woman sitting across from him, who sixty-two years ago went to her wedding carrying her schoolbooks in one hand and her roller skates in the other, smiled.[7]

CULTURAL FACTORS

The social and psychological forces that influence the aging process are, in turn, influenced by the entrenched cultural norms of a society. American culture places high value on independence, self-sufficiency and individualism, on the ability of people to take care of themselves with a minimum of help from others. Perhaps this is why so many people dread growing older. They mistakenly see old age as a time when, for reasons of poor health or limited finances, they will have to depend on others. This desire for independence also explains why so many older people who need help fail to seek it or take advantage of help when it is available. But this idea of independence is largely a myth. The fact is that, especially in a highly complex society such as our own, all of us throughout our lives are strongly dependent on others.

Relative to their whole life span, humans have the longest period of dependency of any creature on earth. Most animals mature within a matter of days, weeks or months to the point where they are able to subsist on their own. Human infants, however, require about a year before they can even walk and another year before they can begin to use language or feed themselves. For several more years, they have to be watched over, protected and carefully trained. In adolescence, they begin to struggle for more and more independence from their parents, but in a complex society like ours they will not really be able to provide for themselves until their late teens or even later. When they can, they are finally recognized as "adults."

Every sign of independence and self-reliance is encouraged. The infant taking its first faltering steps, a little boy with his lunch box heading alone for the bus stop on the first day of school, a young girl riding her first bicycle--all these are experiences that parents will brag about to their relatives and friends. Parents may worry the first time their daughter drives off alone with the family car, but a few months earlier they were probably helping her to prepare for her driving test. If she has an accident, according to them, it will usually be "the other guy's fault."

Heroes in our culture are often those who individually accomplish some great feat. Abraham Lincoln is one of America's most revered presidents at least partly because he fits the image of the "self-made man" who started out in a log cabin and made it to the White House. Of course, anyone who is really familiar with Lincoln's life knows he did not succeed all by himself, nor does anyone else in our society. All our lives we depend heavily on others, but as long as we can work and earn money to pay for the goods and services others provide, we are considered independent. Except for children and people who are severely handicapped, those who cannot or do not work and pay their own way are likely to be looked down upon by those who can and do. It is for this reason that many dread growing old. They look upon old age as a time when people are forced back into a second childhood, no longer able to provide for themselves and forced to depend on others.

In traditional societies and in earlier times in American society, the responsibility of caring for the old and the infirm rested mainly with the family. There are still many states which have laws requiring that people provide for their aging parents, but such laws are seldom enforced. More often, the assumption now is that when people reach adulthood they will be on their own until they die. If they cannot take care of themselves, they become the responsibility of the government through unemployment compensation, Social Security, public assistance, or some other program of the "welfare state."

The division of families by separation and divorce and the high degree of mobility in our society make it difficult to apply the old system of family responsibility for elders. Sons and daughters who live hundreds or thousands of miles from their parents are not likely to be in a situation in which they can be of much help. Even where they are welcome, parents often cling desperately to their independence and avoid becoming a "burden" to their offspring by moving in with them or accepting their aid. The shift of responsibility from family to other institutions is reflected in the case of Jane Smith.

Case 5. Jane Smith

Mrs. Jane Smith, 80, had...serious problems. She lived in a tiny apartment on the fifth floor of a walk-up, ruined, burned out tenement in a dangerous neighborhood. Only she and two other tenants remained in the building. Most of the apartments were boarded up, and there was no heat or hot water, as a result of fires. Vagrants had gotten into some of the apartments and lurked in the halls. So Mrs. Smith lived in fear of muggers and fire and worried about how she could survive the winter without heat.

Mrs. Smith is a widow with one married daughter who lives in California and rarely even writes to her mother.

The Friendship Center caseworker who visited Mrs. Smith found that the continuous stress had caused mental deterioration. Mrs. Smith spoke lucidly until a problem was mentioned--her loneliness, her fear of mugging--and then she whispered and became incoherent. She also needed medical attention for a heart condition and severe arthritis but was too upset over her housing situation to attend to these.

Friendship Center staff tried for many months to get Mrs. Smith an apartment in a nearby low income housing project without success. Meanwhile, they visited and telephoned her daily and encouraged her to come to the Center. They fixed the locks on her windows and doors and provided a heater and blankets. Most important, they gave her strength and reassurance--the knowledge that they cared and were trying to help her.

Eventually, Friendship Center staff found an apartment for Mrs. Smith, though not in a housing project, and helped her to move and get settled in her new quarters. Even though Mrs. Smith wished to move, it was difficult and frightening for her to uproot herself from familiar surroundings, and she needed encouragement and support to do so. Friendship Center staff also obtained financial assistance from the Community Service Society to cover her moving expenses, since as an SSI (Supplemental Security Income) beneficiary, Mrs. Smith could not get this assistance from the government.

To conclude, Mrs. Smith was balancing on the edge of disaster. Her precarious physical and emotional stability could not long have withstood the continued stress of living in fear of muggings and fire, without heat, and in utter isolation. Friendship Center's intervention not only helped solve her immediate need for new and safer living quarters, but provided the emotional support she needed so that she could continue to live independently as she wished and with a greater degree of satisfaction.[8]

The case of Jane Smith is not typical, but neither is it unusual. She is just one of many thousands in the inner city who have been discovered and helped by New York City's Friendship Center and similar agencies throughout the United States. Fortunately, most older people are in good health and have sufficient financial resources to avoid getting into the kind of trap in which Jane Smith found herself. But, when it becomes necessary for an agency to intervene, it is important, according to the cultural standpoint, that the help provided contributes to the person's sense of independence and dignity, as it did in this situation.

LIFE CYCLE

Since ancient times, one persistent idea about aging has been that it is part of a cycle in which people proceed through a series of stages from birth to death. The Talmud outlined fourteen stages in the life of man and described the appropriate tasks and activities of each. Plato, Confucius, Shakespeare and many others have contributed their own descriptions of the stages of life to literature. (However, it is interesting to note that they all described the life cycle of man, not woman.)

What is comparatively new is the scientific study of the life cycle for both men and women. Sigmund Freud developed a theory that virtually all personal development takes place in the formative years of childhood and adolescence. Carl Gustav Jung, a disciple of Freud, rejected this idea and instead argued that all of life is a dynamic process of development that ends only with death. He divided the life cycle into two stages. Until about age forty, according to his scheme of things, the individual is oriented toward his external environment and coming to terms with the outer world. In the second stage, development is directed inward in a process of self-realization and coming to terms with oneself.

Jung's ideas were more the result of theorizing on the basis of reflections about his experiences with patients than of scientific research. Yet his basic idea of a fundamental change around age forty has been upheld by later research, although contemporary theories divide the life cycle into more stages. Scientific studies of the life cycle began about fifty years ago. Among those who have developed research-based theories are Charlotte Buhler, Erik Erikson, Roger Gould, Daniel Levinson and Bernice Neugarten. While some differences exist in each of the theories, their studies tend to be far more supportive of each other than contradictory. Major conclusions they have reached include:

1. All of life is a developmental process which can be divided into stages that roughly correspond to chronological age.

2. The stages of the life cycle can be described, but not prescribed. That is to say, there are very significant numbers of happy, well-adjusted people who do not fit the "typical" pattern for the age group. People should not be disturbed by this or try to make their lives fit the theoretical pattern.

3. The experience and behavior of people at various stages of the life cycle, and the ages at which they occur, are strongly influenced by society and culture. There is considerable variation in the pattern, for example, between social classes and even more from one society to another.

4. The stages of the life cycle are similar, but not the same, for males and females. This is due both to physiological differences and to differences in their societal roles. For example, in spite of a lot of popular theorizing about the so-called "male menopause," there is no scientific evidence that men experience anything like the psychological adjustment that women face when their potential for childbearing ends.

The study of aging is in its infancy and, as with any science, there is always a gap between what is known scientifically and what is perceived as truth by the public. The prevailing public notion still tends to view the aging process in much the same way as Freud. People tend to think in terms of a process of development leading to maturity, then a levelling off through the adult years, and finally a period of decline ending in death. This view of life is undoubtedly changing as more and more of what is known to specialists is translated into laymen's terms through the media and popular literature. The potential for all of life to be dynamic, self-fulfilling and rewarding is obviously there. It remains the job of the individual and society to provide the opportunity for that potential to be realized. In this task, educators will play a critical role.

MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT THE AGING PROCESS

MYTH: Age is determined by the number of years a person has lived, and at a certain age people become old.

FACT: Every person ages differently and has many ages, of which chronological age is only one. There is a process of biological decline in the later years, but aging is a lifelong process that involves genetic inheritance, social and cultural factors, and the personal life style of the individual. Aging involves development, not just decline.

MYTH: Because people now live longer, the human life span is increasing.

FACT: There is no evidence that the natural life span of humans has increased, and there is considerable evidence that it has not. What has happened is that, mainly due to medical advances, more people have been given the chance to live out more of their potential life span. At the same time, much research is under way which may eventually lead to significant increases in the life span itself.

MYTH: Aging is an inevitable, irreversible process over which the individual has no control.

FACT: Aging is inevitable and, from the biological standpoint, irreversible. However, personal life style has much to do with how people age and the length of their lives. By maintaining good habits of physical and mental health, people not only live longer but also live "younger."

MYTH: Elderly people are sickly, inactive and dependent on others.

FACT: While elderly people are more likely to have chronic illnesses, they are also less susceptible to acute illnesses. Their chronic illnesses are, for the most part, treatable and do not interfere with living a normal life. Only about four per cent of people over sixty-five are confined to institutions, such as nursing homes. The great majority live in their own homes, are self-supporting and live active and useful lives.

ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

1. Organize a set of short vignettes of older people, age sixty and above, similar to those included in this chapter. Include information in each vignette about the person's current activities and functions, but do not include the person's age. Have the class individually or in small groups try to guess the age of each person described. When all are finished, discuss their estimates and reasons for them. Then reveal the true ages of the people and discuss these questions, "How much does chronological age tell about how 'old' a person is? What other factors are involved?"

2. Set up an activity similar to the above, but use photographs of people rather than written accounts.

3. Have students individually divide a sheet of lined paper into three columns and number the spaces from 1 to 70. Letting each space represent one year of their life, ask them to write a "status name" into each space to represent a role they have played or might play at that age. (For example, "first grader" at age six, "boy scout" at age twelve, "licensed driver" at age eighteen.) When they are finished, ask them to put a check mark next to each status that they would choose for themselves. (For example, they might choose the status of "parent," but they would not choose the status of "taxpayer.") Compare results for the class and discuss these questions:

   a. At what stages of the life cycle did you find it most difficult to fill in the spaces? Why?

   b. At what ages do people have the most control over the roles they play in society? At what ages do they have the least control? Why?

   c. Do you think the patterns of the life cycle that you listed describe life as it really is?

   A good follow-up activity would be to arrange for some older people to visit the classroom and to discuss the results of the activity from their own perceptions of the life cycle.

4. Gather information about the life cycle of selected animals, including some that have both shorter and longer life spans than humans. Try to diagram their life cycles into stages of life and then compare them to the stages of life for a human being. What similarities and differences are found? What do the results seem to indicate about the life cycle of humans as compared to other animals?

5. Have students conduct an oral history interview with an elderly person taking notes on the discussion or recording it on tape for later analysis. Assign specific topics for interviews, such as recollections of a particular historical event or period, reminiscences of youth or, for an immigrant, expectations and realities of coming to America. Have students carefully work out questions before conducting their interviews in order to get the most out of their conversations. Give students the opportunity to discuss and compare their interviews in class not only in terms of the information gained but also in terms of their impression of the experience.

6. Identify older people in the community who practice some special craft or skill. Arrange for students to visit them in their home or shop or invite them to the classroom to demonstrate their skill and talk about what they do.

USEFUL TERMS FOR STUDENTS TO KNOW

CENTENARIAN: A person age one-hundred or more (Similarly: nonagenarian, between ninety and one-hundred; octagenarian, between eighty and ninety, and septuagenarian, between seventy and eighty.)

GENETICS: The branch of biology that deals with heredity

GERIATRICS: The branch of medicine that deals with old age

GERONTOLOGY: The scientific study of aging, especially old age

LIFE EXPECTANCY: The average age to which people in a particular category can be expected to live

LIFE SPAN: The normal potential length of life

LONGEVITY: The actual length of life. Long-lived people are described as longevous.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

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TWO. ATTITUDES ABOUT AGING

"How old would you be if you didn't know how old you was?"
--Satchel Paige

Two contrasting stereotypes of aging and the elderly appear in American culture. On one hand, aging is viewed as development toward the "golden age" and the respected status of "senior citizen." According to this view, old people are gentle, serene, wise and worthy of respect. The counter-stereotype sees aging as a process of decline or degeneration leading to a situation of dependency, even second childhood. According to this way of thinking, elderly people are sickly, backward-looking, inactive and a burden to all. Both of these stereotypes have strong historical and cultural roots.

Throughout history until modern times elders have generally held a position of special importance in society. People who survived to a "ripe old age" were exceptional, and younger generations held them in high regard for their collected wisdom, experience and sheer ability to survive. In primitive and traditional societies, with little change from one generation to another, elders represented to the young a model for their own future. In times of difficulty or disaster, elders could counsel the young; thus they often assumed roles as leaders and decision makers.

The social environment in which people grew old had many features operating in favor of the aging person. People lived in smaller communities with far less mobility where lifelong friendships could be developed and maintained. In place of our modern spirit of individualism and self-reliance were strong and supportive family and kinship ties. Offspring were expected to support aging parents, just as they expected to be cared for should they have the good fortune of long life.

Of course, it is possible to romanticize the past, and it must be admitted that the reality did not always match the ideal. There were family feuds. The young sometimes resented the interference of their elders, and aging parents were sometimes abandoned by their offspring. For the aged person who was unable to support himself and who had no relatives or friends willing to assume the task, the alternative was the infamous poorhouse.

Yet literature is full of references that reflect the ideal of a good old age. Robert Browning wrote of the "last of life,

for which the first was made," and Oliver Goldsmith described the model for the good life as, "a youth of labor with an age of ease." From Victor Hugo come the lines, "When grace is joined with wrinkles, it is adorable. There is an unspeakable dawn in happy old age." Longfellow offered these lines:

> For age is opportunity no less
> Than youth itself, though in
> another dress.
> And as the evening twilight
> fades away
> The sky is filled with stars
> invisible by day.

The bright prospect of a good old age, however, is not the only view presented in literature. The idea of aging as decline is another important theme. In *As You Like It*, Shakespeare outlined the life cycle in seven stages and characterized the "seventh age" as:

> ...Last scene of all,
> That ends this strange eventful history,
> Is second childishness, and mere oblivion,
> Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

Centuries before him, the Old Testament psalmist complained, in Psalm 102, verse 11: "My days are like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass."

These ambivalent feelings about aging surface in the thinking of people today, but unfortunately the negative view seems to dominate, and this is particularly true among the young.

EVIDENCE OF NEGATIVE ATTITUDES

Under a grant from the National Retired Teachers Association (NRTA) and American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), the University of Maryland's Center on Aging conducted a yearlong study of children's attitudes toward the elderly.[1] Involved in the study were 180 children, ages three to eleven, in a rural suburban county near Washington, D.C. The children represented a wide range of socioeconomic status, racial and ethnic groups. While the study showed that the children's attitudes were complex and mixed, they were also found to be generally negative and stereotypic.

While children described older people as rich, friendly, wonderful and good, they also described them as sick, ugly and sad. Shown four pictures of men of different ages, most children said they would prefer to be with the youngest of the men shown. The fact that the children thought of old people as passive and ailing surfaced when they were asked what they might do with an

elderly person. Responses included, "Cheer him up and help him forget he's old," "take him for walks," "help them across the street," and "stay with them in case anything goes wrong." This perception of aging as physical decline also came through when children described old people by saying they "are wrinkled up," "have gray hair," "are short," "talk funny," "have heart attacks," and "have sprained backs and arthritis."

The study revealed that the most negative views came from the youngest children, but that negative views were dominant in children of all ages, especially in regard to their own aging. Only 11% of the children had anything positive to say about growing old themselves. The children were asked how they would feel about being as old as the oldest man in the pictures they were shown. Typical responses were: "Oh no, not me!" "I don't want to get that old!" "Awful, terrible, yuk!"

Similar attitudes are expressed among high school students. When forty-five junior/senior students in a suburban Massachusetts high school were asked to list terms describing themselves between ages sixty and seventy, the results were overwhelmingly negative.[2] Typical of the terms used were, "old geezer, feeble, arthritic, old goat, senile, crazy, rheumatic, recluse, old bag, and fuddy-duddy." At age seventy, several students simply listed themselves as "dead" or "corpse." Replications of this same experiment in other schools produced virtually identical results.

The fact that these attitudes carry over into adult years is documented in an extensive study made by Louis Harris and Associates for the National Council on the Aging. The poll showed that:

> Few people in this country today single out the later years as the most desirable period of one's life. While substantial numbers (69%) considered the teens, 20's and 30's as "the best years of a person's life," only two per cent of the public felt that way about the 60's and less than 0.5% about the 70's.[3]

It is interesting to note that many people who had passed age sixty, in comparison with other age groups, had more positive views of old age. For example, eight per cent of the older people questioned thought of the 60's and 70's as "the best years of a person's life" compared to only two per cent of the public-at-large.

The youth orientation of our culture is reflected in our patterns of speech. The young are often spoken of as "alive," "refreshing," and the "promise of the future." In middle age we are "in our prime" and, at least for some of us, "life begins at forty." But when people grow old they may find themselves described as "has beens," "over the hill" or "on the shelf." Consequently, Americans spend billions each year to hide their true age with beauty aids, wigs and hair dyes.

Negative attitudes toward aging reflect deeply embedded American values in favor of that which is productive, functional, useful. When old appliances or automobiles become expensive to maintain, out of style or simply "unattractive," they are hauled off to the dump or traded in for newer models. Old buildings are more likely to be torn down than they are to be renovated. The old is constantly being pushed aside to make way for the new.

At the same time, the ambivalence of our attitudes is reflected in the preservation of historical sites and the collecting of curios and mementos of the past. Historical museums draw millions of visitors each year, and the traffic in antiques is one of the most flourishing and lucrative businesses in the United States. Unfortunately, this aspect of our attitudes relates more to past generations than it does to living people.

There are a variety of ways in which negative attitudes toward aging and the elderly are maintained and transmitted to the young. These include age segregation, jokes and cartoons, the popular media, and even the intrinsic bias of children's books and the curriculum materials used in the schools. Each of these will be examined separately.

AGE SEGREGATION

When the University of Maryland team conducted its study of attitudes among children, it found that while most children could identify an older person within the family structure, only thirty-nine of the 180 children could identify an older person they knew outside of the family unit. Visits to older relatives were usually limited to once or twice a year, and in most cases the children's grandparents lived in another state. These results are not surprising, given the high mobility of American society which splits up multigenerational families and the pattern of maintaining separation betwen age groups in school, work, and play.

Young people today are in the paradoxical situation of being far more likely than the youth of yesteryear to have living grandparents but less likely to know them well if they have them. In 1920, only 11% of the ten-year-olds in the country had four living grandparents. In 1970, 71% of them did.[4] But since most grandparents do not live with their grandchildren, or even in the same community, their contact often takes the form of letters, phone calls or infrequent visits.

Millions of American families move each year, with five years the average stay in one place. The elderly do not move so easily or readily. Many of them do not wish to, and many of them cannot. During the postwar decades, as the suburbs grew the central cities and rural areas declined. The suburbs have younger populations, while older people are more heavily concentrated in rural areas and central cities. Those older people who do move into popular

retirement areas, such as Florida or Arizona, frequently move into retirement communities made up of people of their own age set where contact with the young tends to be infrequent and impersonal.

According to the Harris Poll cited, most older Americans do have some regular family contact. Four-fifths of the senior citizens polled said they had living children, and over half of these said they had seen them "within the last day or so." Of those who had grandchildren, almost half reported having seen them in the last day or so.[5] But these statistics do not indicate *how many* of the senior citizens' children and grandchildren were seen. For example, a grandmother with eight grandchildren may see two of them fairly regularly while the other six are scattered in distant states and seldom visit. Also, seeing someone on a fairly regular basis is not the same as living in the same house and playing an active role as a member of the family. While it is reassuring to know that most senior citizens have some regular family contact, the conclusion sometimes drawn from these statistics -- that elders are not isolated from their families -- is unwarranted. As seen above, the University of Maryland study supports this conclusion.

The noted anthropologist, Margaret Mead, believes that the lack of contact between children and their grandparents has contributed to developing a sense of the "timeless present" in the minds of today's youth who have little regard for the past or the future. When children of earlier times did not have living grandparents of their own, they at least had surrogate grandparents in the form of elders with whom they had enduring contacts in the stable multigenerational communities. As children grew up with older people around them, they heard elders give firsthand accounts of their own experiences and the great events of their lives. According to Dr. Mead, under these conditions history and tradition had a personal meaning and were not simply the dry and sterile accounts of the past to be learned from a textbook. In explaining the role of grandparents as educators, Dr. Mead wrote:

> For the last hundred years it is the grandparents who have seen more change than any generation in the history of the world. When my grandmother died in 1928 at the age of eighty-two, she had seen the whole development of the horseless carriage, the flying machine, the telegraph and Atlantic cables, telephone, radio and silent films. In my lifetime, I have lived through driving a horse and buggy, making butter, going to bed with a kerosene lamp, the appearance and disappearance of the great airships; and because I have been able to go back and forth to the world of peoples still in the Stone Age, I have also been a participant in their leap into the modern world. Grandparents and great-grandparents have now become the living repositories of change, living evidence that human beings can adjust, can take in the enormous changes which separate

> the pre-1945 generation from those who were reared after the war. When, under simpler conditions, it was the parent-reared child who was more likely to accept change, participating as the child did in the active, young unfinished lifeline of the parent, today the reverse is true. Today's parents of young children were born into the world of television, computers, space exploration, the bomb, and they have seen much less change than their parents and their grandparents. Many of them learned in school that the only safe course, the only safety from being overwhelmed by the knowledge of their teachers, was simply to refuse to deal with history at all. This condition of living in a kind of timeless present has been exacerbated by the growth of suburbia, which has meant the isolation of each age and class and ethnic minority within its own zoned territory or strangled inner city slum. If all of the adults in the community are in the same age group, have about the same income and are ethnically homogeneous, the children grow up to accept the small world in which they live as the only version of reality.[6]

As a society we do much to separate people by age groups beginning with early childhood. In school, children begin with nursery and kindergarten classes and proceed grade by grade and age by age, through elementary, junior high and senior high school, usually in separate buildings for each level. Recreation and social activities are organized by age sets, and this pattern continues through the adult years. Team sports, scout troops, fraternities, lodges, mothers' groups, and golden agers' clubs all serve useful social functions, but they also tend to separate us by age. In this respect, the most separated of all are the very young from the very old.

When groups of people are isolated, whether by race, religion, ethnicity or age, their perceptions of each other become distorted and stereotyped. The separation of age groups may be one reason why humor about aging and the elderly is so negative.

HUMOR ABOUT AGING

One trait that makes humans different from other creatures is the ability to laugh, to be embarrassed, to find humor in situations. Anthropologists have learned that one good way to grasp the basic attitudes and values of any culture is to find out what makes people laugh. The results of studies concerning humor about aging are consistent with the findings of researchers who have used more direct methods, such as polls and questionnaires, to study American attitudes about aging.

The first analytical study of humor about aging was done by Erdman Palmore and published in 1971.[7] Palmore analyzed 264 jokes about the aged. His general findings were supported by two studies published a few years later by Joseph Richman, who analyzed 100 jokes, and Leland J. Davies, whose study was based on examination of 363 jokes about aging and 187 jokes about death.[8] Although each study was somewhat different in terms of methodology and findings, they all reached the conclusion that humor about aging is predominantly negative.

The jokes follow several basic themes. Some themes, with examples, are:

1. Degeneration or decline:
   "It may be true life begins at 40, but everything else starts to wear out, fall out, or spread out."[9]

2. Refusal to accept tasks appropriate to age:
   "The rich man's son came home from school looking very sad. 'What's the matter?' the father asked. 'Nobody likes me at school,' the son replied. 'The teachers don't like me, the kids don't like me. The superintendent wants to transfer me. Even the bus driver hates me and the custodian has it in for me. So I don't wanna go anymore.'
   The father adjusted his glasses and consoled, 'Son, you have to go. You're a healthy young man. You have so much to offer the others. Remember, you are a leader. Besides, you're 49 years old, you're the principal, you have to go to school.'"[10]

3. Sexual desire and decline:
   "A small boy was sitting at a curb, crying. An old man passed by and kindly asked, 'Why are you crying, Sonny?' 'Because I can't do what the big boys do.' So the old man sat down and cried too."[11]

4. Lying about age:
   "It's terrible to grow old alone--my wife hasn't had a birthday in six years."[12]

5. Exploitation by the young:
   "A young woman was planning to marry a rich old man, and her friends were discussing the situation. 'What could May possibly find in December?' remarked one of her acquaintances. The other replied, 'Christmas.'"[13]

6. Death:
   "Death is nature's way of telling you to slow down."[14]

Humor about aging reflects sharply different perceptions of the sexes. The "dirty old man" is a very common theme, yet there are few jokes about "dirty old women." On the other hand, there are a great many "old maid" jokes, invariably very negative, but almost no "old bachelor" jokes. In jokes, if not in real life, it is almost always women who lie or are secretive about their age. Women live longer than men, and therefore represent a clear majority among elderly people, yet jokes about aging present a more negative view of the aging woman than of the aging man.

Not all jokes about aging are negative. "Old timer" jokes which usually have a male subject, are generally positive. Some jokes are double-edged, while others portray elderly people as wise, crafty or alert. For example,

> "A reporter asked the centenarian the inevitable, 'To what do you attribute your long life?' 'Not sure yet,' the old-timer replied, eyes-a-twinkle, 'I'm still negotiating with a mattress company and two breakfast food firms.'"[15]

Cartoons and comic strips, when they feature elderly subjects, generally tend to present negative stereotypic views.

In summary, humor about aging reflects the ambivalent attitudes of society about aging, but in the aggregate the emphasis is decidedly negative. The power of this stereotypic humor to influence attitudes and behavior is greatly magnified when it is presented to vast audiences of all ages through the mass media of television.

IMPACT OF MEDIA

The Gray Panthers is an activist group that was formed to combat ageism. Recognizing the powerful impact of television on society's attitudes, the Gray Panthers organized a project called Media Watch. Maggie Kuhn, national convener of the Gray Panthers, and Lydia Bragger, who organized Media Watch, explained in an interview with *Ms.* magazine what the project is all about.

> "We are against television stereotypes that show older people as helpless and decrepit." The group is outraged by Carol Burnett's programs. Kuhn explains, "It's disgusting. On nearly every show, a character comes onstage drooling, senile and slack-jawed. Some older people do lose control of their mouth muscles; it's irreversible and it's not funny. On the show, this female character is brought out for a good laugh, and what's worse, everybody laughs."
>
> ..."She demeans older people with ridiculous dialogues about sex, implying all they can do is put their false teeth in the water at night. The idea that they are so limited makes older people look useless and helpless."

So the Gray Panthers took action. They wrote to and met with CBS executives, and Bragger will present her criticism to the National Broadcasters' Code Board, which regulates the networks.

For the future, the Panthers are developing guidelines for other media watch groups to monitor other television programs, like the "Tonight Show," where Johnny Carson stumbles out, acts silly, and explains that he is a Gray Panther.[16]

There are now a number of weekly television shows, especially comedies, that regularly feature older characters. While they generally present stereotypic characters, the stereotypes are not always negative. Grandma and Grandpa in the popular family program, "The Waltons," are portrayed in a very favorable light. The program features the three-generation rural household which is rare in our own time. But in the warm supportive relationship of children, parents, and grandparents, the Waltons represent an ideal of what family could and sometimes did mean in an earlier time.

Occasionally there are special programs in which elderly people are presented in a positive way. A good example is "The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman" which fictionally but realistically chronicled the life of a Black woman, from her childhood as a slave in the 1860s to her participation as a centenarian in the civil rights movement of the 1960s. In her wrinkled old age, Miss Jane appeared as a person who, in spite of all adversity, emerged as an old woman of dignity, honor and beauty. The enormous success of programs like these demonstrates that broadcasters need not rely on negative caricatures to attract viewers.

On the average, children growing up today have viewed 10,000 to 15,000 hours of television by the time they are sixteen--more hours than they have spent in school--and most of what they watch does not fall into the categories of "children's" or "family" programming. The views of aging and older people presented through the medium of television probably have at least as great an impact on children's attitudes as what they read and learn at school, but here too there is reason for concern.

CHILDREN'S BOOKS AND CURRICULUM MATERIALS

One of the most important sources of information for children beginning to read is picture books. After reading numerous picture books with his own daughter, Edward F. Ansello, associate director of the University of Maryland Center on Aging, was inspired to do an analytical study of the images of older people presented in children's first literature. He began with no preconceived assumptions about what he would find, but what he did find was disturbing.

Of 656 books examined, only 108 (16.46%) contained an older character. In contrast to actual population ratios, the majority of these characters were male. In less than four per-cent of the books, the main character was an older person. In over half the cases, the older character was not identified as having an occupation or any significant function in society. The simple word "old" accounted for three-fourths of all the physical adjectives used to describe older characters, and the use of the terms "old," "elder" and "ancient" together made up 86 per cent of all physical descriptors. Females were much more frequently referred to as "tired" or "sick" than were males. The most frequently used terms to describe the personalities of older characters were "poor" and "sad." Do such books receive wide circulation? Although most of the books analyzed were published within ten years prior to the study, Ansello found that many of the most ageist books were in their tenth, twelfth or later printings with one particularly negative book going into its sixteenth printing.[17]

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Besides the lessons picture book texts teach children about aging, another matter of concern must be what the pictures teach. Two studies, done in 1968 and 1975, of the way old age is treated in elementary school reading textbooks showed that old characters are generally portrayed in a positive way. Apparently books written expressly for use in the classroom fare better in this regard than do children's picture books in general. However, the studies showed that older people were presented in less than five per cent of the illustrations. Elderly male characters outnumbered elderly females by more than two to one. Surprisingly, the newer

texts studied in 1975 had considerably fewer older characters than the earlier texts analyzed in 1968.[18]

At the University of Nebraska, a study was conducted of fifty-three books that received the Newbury Medal for Adolescent Literature. The study did not reveal as many stereotypes of the elderly as were found in the children's picture books studied by Ansello, but this may be due partly to the fact that these are award-winning books. While more older characters are present in this adolescent literature and are presented in a more positive fashion, the characters are seldom fully developed and tend to "portray older people only as shadows who inhabit the fringes of life and are never really needed for good or ill."[19] The conclusion was reached that:

> ...adolescent literature tends to support the youth culture with the emphasis on strength, beauty, and physical activity. There seem to be few characters who gain the respect of others through the use of their wisdom, insight or patience. The strengths that can be gained through the process of aging are not recognized nor rewarded in the stories. There seems to be little reason or value in being old or in having older people present.[20]

IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION

One way in which attitudes can be harmful is by becoming self-fulfilling prophecies. If the popular expectation is that older people will be inactive, senile, backward-looking, etc., it is not likely that society will entrust elders with responsible roles in which they can demonstrate otherwise. The self-fulfilling prophecy can also work in a more personal way. Social scientists have long recognized that people tend to adopt the traits and characteristics that fit society's image of their role. Studies have suggested that this principle applies in the way people adapt to their role as teenagers, young adults, middle-aged and older persons. In short, the attitudes that we hold about aging have much to do with the way we treat older people and the way we grow old ourselves.

Although attitudes are not the only influence on behavior, they certainly play a critical role in determining the way people act. Prejudice is not always the basis for discrimination, but certainly the prejudiced person is more likely to practice discrimination or accept it when it is practiced by others. Prejudice may cause the young to avoid contact with older people and any consideration of their own aging. Given all the biased input in the form of jokes, cartoons, television and children's literature, it would be surprising if young people could survive with a positive view toward their own futures as aging persons. Carol Seefeldt, who participated in the University of Maryland's study

of children's attitudes, summarized the dangers and the implications for education.

> Stereotypic thinking, the categorizing of any group of people, is potentially dangerous. Yet children, who hold negative and stereotypic attitudes of aging and the elderly, are particularly disadvantaged. Only as children are able to view their own aging positively, and look on the elderly as a group of individually diverse people, will they be able to achieve full potential. Only as children are able to adapt to their own changing, growing, aging bodies, will they develop the positive self concepts necessary for full living at every stage of life.
>
> How children view their own aging and the elderly would appear to have serious implications for society. Bennett and Eckman (1973) believe that the problems of the elderly in our society may be the direct result of the inability or unwillingness to plan for one's own aging. Children who hold negative attitudes toward age and being old may disassociate themselves from the aging process and the elderly. In view of the fact that there are 30 million people over sixty years of age in the United States today, and the fact that it is estimated that one-fifth of the population will be over sixty years of age by the year 2000, it seems critical that educators begin to examine how they are preparing children to adjust to their own aging and to relate positively to those who are older than they.
>
> It seems apparent that the experiences and information children gain in the school setting contribute to the formation of their attitudes. Thus educators do have the responsibility of examining the ways they influence children's attitudes toward aging and the elderly. Not only must educators take a critical look at the subtle ways they influence children's attitudes toward age, but they must begin to plan systematic ways to foster positive attitudes toward aging and the elderly.[21]

WHAT TEACHERS CAN DO

There are a number of ways that teachers can work to combat ageism. The body of available literature and curriculum materials for children, on the whole, tends to portray old age in a negative, distorted or stereotypic fashion. But teachers need to be concerned with those materials which they themselves put into the hands of students. By making careful selection of material for use in their own classrooms and libraries, teachers can assure that, at least in school, their students receive a more balanced portrayal of older people and aging.

When budgetary or other constraints limit the teacher's freedom to choose new materials, at least the teacher's awareness of bias makes it possible to take other measures to counteract the distortion of the materials in use. Bulletin boards, photo displays, visits to the classroom by older people, and the use of older people as volunteers in the classroom can help to offset any bias that may be present in textbooks. The teacher can also design supplementary lessons and activities to substitute for stories or lessons that are particularly objectionable.

While school administrators particularly have to be concerned about the constraints of budget, they are also educators responsible for what children learn in school, and most of them take this responsibility seriously. If teachers can present clear evidence that the materials in use reflect an age bias and are harmful to children's attitudes, they may well find their administrators willing to do whatever is possible to provide better materials. The idea that administrators are resistant to change and hate to spend money is a stereotype in itself.

Especially for teachers at the secondary level, the best approach to dealing with stereotypes and bias may be to face the issue head-on; that is, to actually have students analyze jokes, cartoons, television programs, advertising, music, literature and other media through which age stereotypes are transmitted. An analytical approach to humor, for example, may not change what makes a student laugh; but then again, it may. At least it would help students to recognize what they are laughing at and see through it for what it is.

One of the chief factors that seems to contribute to negative attitudes among the young is the separation of the young from the old. The school can be one vehicle through which contact between youth and elders is reestablished, thus repairing some of the damage done by the decline of intergenerational families and the stable communities in which young people of an earlier time typically grew up. A number of school systems have instituted programs to do exactly that.

The programs take a variety of forms. In some, such as the well-known Foxfire Project of Rabun Gap, Georgia, young people go to the elders in their area to learn crafts, skills, songs, anecdotes and reminiscences of the past. In others, teenagers provide services for elderly people, such as meal preparation, shopping and home maintenance chores. Still others, like the Youth Conferences With Older Americans, simply provide the opportunity for older and younger people to interact and discuss matters of mutual interest. Many of the programs bring seniors into the schools to work with students and help them learn.

The STEP Project in Redding, Connecticut, is a good example of a program that benefits old and young alike. It began with one learning disabilities teacher who had a good idea and the will

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These photos are of some of the older volunteers who serve the Teaching and Learning About Aging Project.

Opposite, above: Zillah Averett, a retired caterer, demonstrates kitchen skills to junior high home economics students.

Opposite, below left: Peg Kinzie brings the perspective of lony life to a discussion of "The Changing Family" in a high school sociology class.

Opposite, below right: Alfred Schmaltz, a retired minister, demonstrates his hobby of wood carving for elementary students.

Above: Lillian Parker teaches games of her childhood to first graders in physical education.

to make it work.

One sunny morning last December, Robert H. Heatley sat down beside a seventh-grade pupil at John Read Middle School in Redding, Connecticut, and watched patiently as the boy agonized over a math problem. "That was a difficult concept for me, too, when I was in school, David, " Heatley said finally, hoping to ease the youngster's frustration. Edging his chair closer, he suggested a different approach, and the twelve-year-old boy, eagerness now written on his face, went on to work out the solution himself.

Robert Heatley is not a teacher in the usual sense. Until recently, the eighty-year old retired businessman had not been inside a classroom for more than sixty years. Nor is David a typical student. He is a problem learner, unable to keep pace with other seventh graders. Man and boy are part of an educational experiment being watched closely by Connecticut and other states to determine whether senior citizens--whom many consider one of the nation's most neglected resources--can successfully tutor youngsters with learning difficulties. At present, nine seniors, all retired and over sixty and twenty-five seventh and eighth graders are involved in the Redding project known as STEP--Senior Citizen Tutoring Program.

Senior Citizen Tutoring Program is the idea of Rosalie Saul, a learning disabilities teacher in the Redding school system and the project's director. "It became clear to me some time ago," she says, "that traditional teaching methods simply don't work with students who have special problems in learning." Some of them were already convinced that they were worthless, that nobody cared or believed in them any more. If they were to be helped at all, she felt they would have to be removed from regular classroom competition, demands, and frustrations and given a taste of success...

In order to get across the teaching methods she had in mind, Mrs. Saul put her tutor recruits through a basic training program. "I didn't want the seniors to fail any more than I wanted the youngsters to fail," she says. At first, the seniors observed traditional classroom operations, from kindergarten through high school. The modern equipment and teaching methods surprised many of them. "I'll admit I was a little shocked at the freedom children have now," Mr. Heatley remarked wryly. However, Mrs. Saul explained that the techniques they would use with problem learners would be markedly different. Instead of concentrating directly on reading, writing and arithmetic, tutors would help the middle school problem learners make "learning games" for elementary school pupils.

"We didn't plan to say to the youngsters, 'Hey, you can't read and write.' What we would say was, 'There are some kids in the third grade who can't read and write and we want you to help them by making up learning games.'" This way, Mrs. Saul says, the problem learners would feel that they were doing something useful, and all the while they would be working in a non-competitive, non-threatening situation, learning in the process many of the skills they themselves had failed to master earlier...

Frances and Philip Dormont, a husband-wife team, tell of one of their pupils, thirteen year old Carol. "She was extremely sullen, apathetic and indifferent," says Frances Dormont, a retired fashion designer. "We couldn't interest her in anything, so we mostly sat and talked. She was quite unhappy at home, and kept saying she was going to run away and hitchhike across the country."

Talking to someone and having them pay attention to her generated a change in Carol. One day she confided to her tutor, "You know, I guess I won't quit school after all." She began to show an interest in reading and recently asked to learn to type.

Sharon, also thirteen, was sent to STEP because she was so withdrawn that she wouldn't even answer her teacher. "One of the teachers asked STEP to make a map for a pupil who had just moved to Redding and was having trouble orienting herself," says Philip Dormont, "and I began working on it with Sharon. She worked very, very slowly but we finally finished. And was she proud! It's hard to believe, I know, but after that she just seemed to blossom." Although still reserved, Sharon recently took part in a class play. "I just can't believe it," says her mother. "Why, she would always run and hide rather than meet people."

Then there was the case of John, whose pronunciation and spelling were so poor that he refused to read out loud. "We got him interested in a word game," says Mr. Dormont. "He seemed to like trying to stump us and would pick the biggest words he could find in the dictionary. 'Parthenogenesis' was one I remember. It was an achievement. He had never used a dictionary before, feeling that it was for 'squares.'"

Hyperactive and restless at first, John calmed down noticeably. Says Mr. Dormont, "His regular teachers began coming up to us and asking, 'What in the world did you do to John? Why, he's become a decent human being.'"

Why has STEP had the success it has had?

"First, I think it should be pointed out that we haven't been totally successful," says Mr. Dormont. "There are youngsters we have yet to reach. In the cases where we have succeeded, we first simply tried to make friends and find out what interests the youngsters, whether it's sewing or growing plants or whatever. We reach them indirectly, trying to avoid the methods that turned them off in their regular classes. And, of course, we are able to work with them on a one-to-one basis..."

Test scores show that the children themselves have made significant academic progress. Their average gain in reading was fourteen months over a seven-month period--twice that expected. The results in spelling and math were equally impressive. Another indication of the program's success is the response of school officials and teachers. At first, many were skeptical of the seniors' ability to handle severely disabled children. Some teachers were even unwilling to release their problem learners from regular classes to participate in STEP. Their attitudes have since changed completely...

The project has not only benefitted the problem learners but the seniors as well. Philip Dormont, for instance, had been a successful artist, selling illustrations to such magazines as the old *Saturday Evening Post* and *Colliers*. Then in 1962, he suffered a stroke that destroyed his confidence. "Using a paint brush seemed beyond me at the time," he says. His artist's paraphernalia gathered dust until one day he found himself offering to illustrate a book on horses that a girl in STEP was writing.

"Once the other kids found out I was an artist, they started begging me to draw everything," Mr. Dormont says. "And once I started drawing again, I found myself regaining my old confidence." During a recent visit to his home, he talked enthusiastically about starting a local drawing club for teenagers, and he is beginning to wonder if magazines might find his work usable once more...

STEP has had one totally unexpected result: a growing sense of community and concern has evolved among its participants--pupils, seniors and teachers. Several of the tutors have brought books or plants for the teachers and school. The teachers in turn have sent cookies made in home economics to the tutors, shared interesting art projects with them, and accepted them as part of the John Read family. "Everyone looks out for the seniors," says Mrs. Saul, "and the seniors reciprocate. It's a magnificent thing to watch. Too much of what we do in this society is kids for kids, seniors for seniors, adults for adults. Mix them all together and the concoction, I assure you, will be a delightful one."[22]

Without realizing it, students in the STEP program and others like it gain much more than improved skills in reading, spelling and arithmetic. Children who have had the opportunity for close personal interaction with people like Robert Heatley or Frances and Philip Dormont surely have a better chance of developing positive attitudes toward older people and toward their own future. Of all the approaches to altering young people's attitudes toward aging, those which bring youth and elders together in cooperative relationships have the highest potential for success.

MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT ATTITUDES

MYTH: The only way to learn about life is by living.

FACT: While there is much about life that can be learned only by experience, how people live and how they relate to others is strongly influenced by attitudes developed when they are young.

MYTH: There's nothing wrong with having a good laugh.

FACT: Whether there's anything wrong with a good laugh depends on what the laughter is about. Humor is one powerful means through which attitudes and values are shaped. If the "good laugh" is provoked by humor that reflects attitudes harmful to people, there is something wrong with having a good laugh.

MYTH: You can't really change what people think.

FACT: Fundamental attitudes of both individuals and society can be altered and even reversed. There was a time when, supposedly, "no Catholic could ever become President," and "no Black could ever play in the major leagues." Obviously people changed their minds. All the evidence indicates that prejudice and bias are learned, not natural or in-born. If learned, they can also be "unlearned" and frequently are.

MYTH: Young people and the elderly cannot relate because they have too little in common.

FACT: There are some elderly people who prefer not to have youngsters around, and there are young people who prefer to have nothing to do with elders. But, invariably, the experience of bringing youth and elders together on a voluntary and cooperative basis demonstrates that they find much in common and that both generations enjoy and profit from the experience.

ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

1. Ask students individually to write an anonymous list of ten terms they might use to describe people over sixty-five. Then ask them to place a plus sign (+) next to each term which has a positive connotation, a minus sign (-) next to each term with a negative connotation, and a zero next to each term which is neutral. When all have completed this task, ask each student to write a paragraph describing what the activity reveals about the student's attitude toward aging and older people. Collect and shuffle the papers and read the lists of terms to the class. Tabulate the total numbers of plus, minus and zero symbols on the blackboard. Read the paragraphs and discuss the entire activity in terms of what it indicates about general attitudes in the class.

2. Arrange for some senior citizens to visit class, but before they meet with the young people have them do the activity described above, except listing terms used to describe teen-agers. Make composite lists of the terms used by each group on the blackboard, overhead projector or duplicator. When the two groups are brought together, have them compare and discuss their lists and talk about each generation's perception of the other.

3. "Personal Feelings About Old Age" is an activity that gives students the opportunity to explore their feelings by projecting themselves into old age.* Have students individually and anonymously answer the following questions:

   a. Name two things that worry you about growing old.

   b. Name two things that you feel would be "neat" about growing old.

   c. Name two things that you dislike about old people.

   d. Name two things that you like about old people.

   e. List the three most common places you would find old people in your community.

   f. To what age would you like to live?

   g. "I consider people over the age of ___ to be old people."

   The class should share their responses to these questions and give their reasons for their responses. Further probing into their attitudes about growing old should be done by asking questions such as:

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*From *Aging*.Gary R. Smith, Center for Teaching International Relations, Graduate School of International Studies, University of Denver, Denver, CO, p. 10.

h. Do you fear growing old? If so, why? Would any changes in our society alleviate your worries about growing old? What would these changes be?

i. What advantages, if any, are there to growing old? Do the advantages outweigh the disadvantages? Why?

j. When you are old, where will be the three places where you will spend most of your time? Does this answer conflict with your response to question e? Why or why not?

4. In preparation for a "rap session" between teenagers and senior citizens, ask senior citizens to answer the same seven questions listed in the first part of the above activity, but simply transform the question into their "personal feelings" about youth. (For example, the first question could become, "Name two things that you feel would worry you about being young today".) When the young people and older people are brought together, have them share and discuss their conceptions and misconceptions.

5. Have students, or a mixed group of students and senior citizens, discuss selected quotations about aging. Divide the class into small groups and ask each group to select the quotation they most agree with and the one they least agree with. Follow with a general discussion about the choices. Some quotations which might be used for this purpose are,

Age is not a particularly interesting subject. Anyone can grow old. All you have to do is live long enough. Groucho Marx

To be seventy years young is sometimes far more hopeful than to be forty years old. Oliver Wendell Holmes

Everyone is too old for something, but no one is too old for everything. Anonymous

Young men think old men are fools; but old men know young men are fools. George Chapman

Where is the life you are so afraid to lose? Erica Jong

Old age isn't so bad when you consider the alternative. Maurice Chevalier

Grow old along with me! The best is yet to be. Robert Browning

One starts to get young at the age of sixty, and then it's too late. Pablo Picasso

When grace is joined with wrinkles, it is adorable. There is an unspeakable dawn in a happy old age.
Victor Hugo

6. Ask students to search for comics, jokes and cartoons which are based on stereotypes of age groups and bring them into class. When a sufficient number has been collected, make photocopies and have the class analyze them in terms of the stereotypes they present. Note the physical features, clothing, types of activity, expressions and other details that are used to convey stereotyped images.

7. Have students analyze advertising in newspapers, magazines or television commercials in terms of images of age groups. This can be done by having each student do the following:

   a. Take a sheet of lined paper and divide it into seven vertical columns. Make the first column about two inches wide, the next five columns about one half inch wide, and leave a wide column on the right.

   b. At the head of the first column write "Product or Service." Head the five narrow columns with these abbreviations: "C" for child, "T" for teenager, "Y" for young adult, "M" for middle-aged, and "E" for elderly. At the top of the last column write "Stereotypes."

   c. For each advertisement or commercial in which people are featured, list in the first column the product or service advertised. In the next five columns place a check mark for each age group represented by the people featured in the advertisement. In the right hand column, list terms that come to mind to describe any stereotypes of age groups that you observe.

   d. Study the results of your analysis, and on the back of your sheet(s) list any conclusions you can draw from this activity about the use of age stereotypes in advertising.

   e. Follow up with a discussion in which the whole class shares its observations. Focus on questions such as,

      - Are there any general stereotypes of age groups that appear repeatedly in advertising a wide range of products and services?

      - What age groups appear most frequently and least frequently in advertisements? Why?

      - Does age stereotyping in advertising reflect any values that are widely shared by our society and expressed in other ways besides advertising?

- Are there things that consumers could or should do about age stereotyping in advertising?

USEFUL TERMS FOR STUDENTS TO KNOW

AGEISM (or AGISM): Discrimination against people on the basis of age

BIAS: Prejudice for or against

CARICATURE: A representation, such as a cartoon, which exaggerates certain features

DISCRIMINATION: To distinguish or differentiate, but often discrimination is used to mean differentiation on the basis of bias or prejudice

INTEGRATION: Uniting or bringing together, such as the bringing together of Black and white or young and old

PREJUDICE: Opinion based on insufficient evidence; an irrational attitude of hostility directed against an individual, a group, a race, or their supposed characteristics

SEGREGATION: Isolation or separation of various categories of people such as Black and white or young and old

STEREOTYPE: A prejudiced view that fails to recognize differences or variations between individuals

VALUES: Strongly held attitudes or beliefs

RECOMMENDED READINGS

BOOKS

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Seefeldt, Carol. "Young and Old Together," *Children Today*, January/February 1977, pp. 21-24.

_____, "Ageism: An Offense Against Us All," *Interracial Books for Children Bulletin*, Vol. 7, No. 6, 1976, p. 3.

_____, "How to Fight Age Bias," *Ms*, June 1975, p. 91.

THREE. AGING IN OTHER TIMES AND PLACES

"To be young is to reach for the future; to be old is to possess the past." --*Martha Tyler John*

How does the situation of older Americans today compare with the situation of elders in times past and in other areas of the world? Compared to other societies, does modern America provide a good social environment in which to grow old? Surprisingly, little attention has been given to comparative studies of aging by either historians or anthropologists until very recently. Studies by cultural anthropologists and ethnologists have typically included extensive information about child rearing, age grades, rites of passage, the role of elders, and so forth, but very few attempts have been made to put this information into a cross-cultural framework. The first adequate social history of aging in American society (David Hackett Fischer, *Growing Old in America*) was not published until 1977. A few recent studies, however, now make it possible to draw some cross-cultural comparisons.

PRIMITIVE HUNTER-GATHERERS

Until about 10,000 years ago, when some people began to plant crops and tame animals, all peoples acquired their food by hunting and gathering, a less efficient means of getting food than farming. Hunter-gatherers were forced to live in small groups and travel constantly over great distances from one food source to another in order to survive. Always on the move, there was no point in building permanent homes, establishing communities, or acquiring more possessions than could easily be carried. There was no need for writing or record keeping. Key information could be remembered and passed on from one generation to another through stories, poems, songs and demonstration.

This is not to say that prehistoric people had no important knowledge. Their survival depended upon mastering extensive information about their environment. A person needed to be able to recognize dozens of plants, know which could be eaten and which were poisonous, and know where and when they could be found. Knowledge of the habits of animals and complicated methods for tracking and hunting them was essential in the training of young hunters. In addition, one had to become familiar with the society's rules for cooperative living, such as religious practices, courtship and marriage, child rearing, and sharing of food and possessions. Although it was possible for one individual to acquire almost the entire knowledge of a culture, it took many years to learn all

there was to know. With no written records, it was the role of adults to constantly teach the young, and the oldest had the most to teach because of their long experience.

Living a precarious life without benefit of modern medicine, hunter-gatherers could not expect to live long. Those who survived to "old age" were highly respected and sometimes were thought of as having magical powers. It is not surprising that elders often played important roles as healers and spiritual leaders. Their accumulated wisdom and experience also frequently gave their opinions greater weight when the group had to make important decisions, such as in settling disputes according to ancient custom.

Although hunting-gathering societies are fast disappearing, a few remnants of these Stone Age people survive in remote and isolated areas today. By observing their way of life, anthropologists have been able to gain some insight into how people might have lived in the thousands of years before recorded history. One such group is the Mbuti pygmies of central Africa.

MBUTI OF THE ITURI FOREST

The Mbuti have lived for thousands of years in the African forest in cooperative hunting bands of about fifty to one hundred people. The Mbuti regard the forest as their spiritual "mother and father" which always protects them and provides for their welfare. Colin Turnbull has made an extensive study of Mbuti culture. Based on his work, the following hypothetical interview between an anthropologist (A) and a Mbuti girl named Epini (E) was written:

A: How old are you?

E: What do you mean?

A: How long ago were you born?

E: We don't count years. It is enough to know if someone is still a child, a young person, a parent, or a grandparent. I am still a young person. I'm not married. That's how old I am.

At another point in the interview, they talked about Epini's family:

A: Do you always go with your parents?

E: No, not always. It might sound like I do because I talk of my mother and father, but that is because I call every woman of that age mother, and every man is my father, and their children are my brothers and sisters. We all do that because we like to think of ourselves in one camp as though we were a single family. Of course, we're not, but we consider it rude to point to some people as being more closely related to you than others. Usually, though, I

try to go with my real family, because I know them best. But if I go with another family, they have just as much right as my own to ask me to help them on the hunt or in building their home. Nobody in a hunting camp would refuse to help another.

A: Then, if you don't necessarily stay together as families, how do you divide the game? What do you do if, say, your friends catch nothing but your family does?

E: This often happens. But it only takes five or six antelope to feed a whole camp of perhaps twenty families. For each to catch his own would be wasteful. We must take only what we need.

A: But why, if there's plenty of game?

E: We believe the animals are as much a part of the forest as we are. We must kill them in order to live, but killing is something we do not enjoy. So we only take what we have to in order to live, and we share it between us. Just yesterday old Tungana stayed behind, and when the hunt came back he felt he had not been given a fair share; so he reminded everyone that certain parts of every animal killed can be eaten only by old people--the head and back, I think he said--and it was bad to break with old customs.

A: What happened then?

E: Someone gave him the back of an antelope and he was happy. There actually is such a custom, but we normally don't worry about it unless there is not enough food to go around. Even those who were too lazy to go on the hunt get a share, but not much, and they will be made fun of for having stayed behind with the children instead of behaving like adults.

A: Does anyone ever try to get more than his fair share?

E: Oh yes! Everyone tries to conceal some choice pieces from a hunt, but never very much. It is more of a game to show how clever we can be, and if we are found out, nobody really minds because nobody would try to feed himself or his family without sharing with others.

A: Nobody at all?

E: I have only known of one, a strange person, Cephu. Once when he was hunting with us, he moved his net out in

front of all the others, instead of staying beside them, so the game fell into his net first. He then claimed it for himself. Everyone was terribly angry.

A: Did your chief punish him?

E: But we don't have chiefs like the villagers do. It is wiser, the old people say, to lead ourselves. What would we do if we depended on a leader and he became ill or died? Where would we find another? Besides, we think it is wrong for any one person to tell others what to do or what not to do. No one person can always be right. If there is anything to be decided, we all discuss it and decide together....

A: Are you saying, then, that there is seldom any disagreement and seldom any fighting?

E: Oh, no! We quarrel quite often, but we always make it up quickly. If two people start actually hitting each other, we all stand around to watch and laugh at them as though they were children, and before it can get too serious, some old person simply walks between them.[1]

This brief interview highlights several important generalizations about aging that have been substantiated in cross-cultural studies of primitive societies in general.

1. A person's age is determined by certain passages or milestones in life--as puberty, marriage, parenthood, grandparenthood--rather than by chronological age. In other words, it is the person's "age grade," not calendrical age, that is important.

2. The aged are ordinarily accorded a share of the food supply in societies which depend upon cooperative methods of acquiring and distributing food.

3. In non-literate societies, the word of an elder about what is "customary" or wise generally is not questioned, as in the case of old Tungana who received a share of food without participating in the hunt.

4. In this society, as in other primitive cultures, the elders play significant roles in keeping the peace.

Leo W. Simmons, who made an extensive cross-cultural study of the role of the aged in primitive societies, came to the conclusion that "security for the aged has depended far more upon their wits than their works; and a fruitful field for such talent has been found in political, civil, and judicial affairs."[2]

While old age guaranteed prestige and certain advantages in primitive society, being old did not in itself mean that a person was secure. It could mean just the opposite. For primitive hunter-gatherers, it was important to be able to move frequently and travel long distances to find food. If the hunting was poor and food supplies were low, having too many mouths to feed could be a serious threat to the survival of the whole group. In some societies when people became too old to assist in hunting or too ill or tired to travel with the group, there was no choice but to abandon them to die. In some cases, instead of leaving the person to die a slow death by starvation, the old person was put to death or encouraged to commit suicide. Sometimes the old people, recognizing that they represented a threat to the survival of the group, would take their own lives.

A French traveller and writer, Jean-Pierre Gontran de Poncins, encountered these practices among Eskimos living in the Canadian Arctic in 1938. He tells of one occasion when a group of Eskimos was sitting at night in an igloo engaged in a lively conversation. There was a great deal of joking and laughing until one bold young man took the occasion to confront one of the old men and say in effect, "If we were all as poor at seal hunting as you are, we would all have to go without eating." Gontran de Poncins describes what followed:

> The old man's blood rushed to his face, but except for a single flash of the eyes he remained impassive. He sat still, unable to reply....He got up after a moment and slipped out of the igloo. His igloo. This made it more unbearable.
>
> Straightening up out of doors, he stood still. The night was black. He felt sick inside with an animal sickness. Something indescribable had happened. This world in which he had lived and hunted his whole life long, was tottering. He strode to the other end of the camp, and crawled into Akyak's igloo. There, without a word, he sat down. Akyak was alone. She looked at him and wondered what the old man was doing in her igloo when he had guests at home. But she asked no questions. Casually, she picked up the teapot and poured him out a mug of tea. He drank it at a gulp, and then said suddenly:
>
> *'Inut-Koak'*--("I am an old man.")
>
> Astonished, Akyak protested vaguely; but he was not listening. His wife sat alone, scraping hides.
>
> Days went by, and life at the camp continued as before. The old man went sealing with the rest. But those words gnawed at him unbearably. Had he been able to reply to them instantly, he would have been delivered of this load on his heart; but the load of which he had not on the instant unburdened himself, he could not now shake off. Bowed over his hole in the ice, he brooded. If he had been able to kill several seals in a row, he would have resumed his place as the great hunter of the clan,

and it would have been his privilege to speak mockingly to the younger man. But fate was against him. He missed seal after seal.

Bit by bit he changed. The burden was there, tormenting him, weighing him down, taking possession of him like a cancer. And there was nothing to do about it. He was afraid of the younger man now. Besides, he was an Eskimo, and his thoughts were not to be revealed.

The day came when he would no longer sit with the rest in another Eskimo's igloo. While they laughed and feasted, he remained at home. Motionless on his *iglerk* [bed] eyes shut, arms hanging loose, like a sick doll. He had stopped going with the others out on the ice. He was beginning to mutter to himself. He was forgetting to eat. His dogs would howl, and he would not so much as go out of doors to beat them.

All this the whole camp observed; and though the young man was blamed, nobody interfered. It was the old man's affair if he had found nothing to answer. Still, the others would come to see him, whether out of curiosity or malice, it is hard to say. They would find him sitting at his end of the *iglerk,* saying over and over to himself:

'Inut-Koak,"...

He was not thinking, but brooding. Like all his kind, a mental problem was to him not a subject for thought but for torment, and its end was obsession. He could not shake this one off. There was only one way to be rid of it, and that was death. But whose death? His, or the young man's?

It was going to be his, and he knew it. He was too old to kill. The thought invaded him, took possession of him, and as he never struggled against it, it undermined him.

Now the camp knew what was in his mind, and still nobody intervened. His friends continued to come round for their mug of tea as if they had no notion of his anguish.

One day he made up his mind. It was evening; his family was there, and the old man spoke.

"Prepare the rope," he said to his wife.

Nobody stirred. They were all like this, and it was true of all of them that once an Eskimo had made up his mind there was no dissuading him from his decision. Not a word was said. The dutiful wife came forward with a rope made of seal. A noose made in it never slips.

Two children crawled noiselessly out to spread the news through the camp.

In the igloo the old man fashioned a running noose. With a single jerk the thing was done. Seated on the edge of the *iglerk,* his face bent down to the ground, he had strangled himself, and his body lay slack. No one would touch it. They would leave it as it was, and strike camp to escape the evil spirit that had possessed this man. The next day they were gone and the igloos stood empty in the white expanse.[3]

In the above example, the old man decided to take his own life because he no longer felt capable of contributing to the survival of the group and was too ashamed to let them support him. On other occasions, it was the group that decided it was time for the old person to die. Such a situation was described to Gontran de Pocins by Father Henry, a missionary priest working among the Eskimos.

> ....Father Henry told me about a man...who had come to him one day and, after the usual tea and silence, had said to him suddenly:
>
> "I took the old woman out on the ice today."
>
> It was his own mother that he had driven out and set down at sea to freeze to death. He was fond of her, he explained. He had always been kind to her. But she was too old, she was no longer good for anything; so blind, she couldn't find the porch to crawl into the igloo. So, on a day of blizzard, the whole family agreeing, he had taken her out, and they had struck camp and gone off, leaving her to die.
>
> "With God's help, I hope in time to change these things, to soften some of their ways," said Father Henry, "but it is difficult. They live a hard life, and it is in all respects a material life. They would say, if they knew our words, that they had to 'face facts.' That man had indeed been a good son. You must have seen yourself how they look after the aged on the trail, running back so often to the sled to see if the old people are warm enough, if they are comfortable, if they are not perhaps hungry and want a bit of fish. And the old people are a burden on the trail, a cause of delay and of complication. But the day comes when, after years with no word of complaint, the young people deem the thing no longer possible, and they leave the old man or the old woman on the ice. The old people are told in advance what their end is to be, and they submit peacefully without a word of recrimination. Sometimes, indeed, they are the first to suggest this end for themselves."[4]

TRADITIONAL PEASANTS

About 10,000 years ago, a quiet revolution was gradually taking place as people in some parts of the world began to invent the techniques of planting crops and raising domestic animals. This Neolithic Revolution was a key step in human development. People could now stop wandering and settle in one place, building permanent homes and villages. Eventually cities and great civilizations developed, based largely on the surplus of food produced by farms in the countryside.

Before the development of agriculture, it had been important for a group of people to have an intimate knowledge of the food resources available over many square miles and to maintain their right to use these resources along with other wandering bands. As agriculture took the place of hunting and gathering, it became important to actually own property, to be able to set boundaries and say, "This is mine" or "This is ours."

Today, a large part of the world's population consists of peasants who exist by tilling the soil using primitive farming methods that have changed little over thousands of years. Modern farm machinery is seldom used, and most labor is performed with simple hand tools, relying on animal power for heavier tasks. Depending on a small plot of land and good fortune for their survival, peasants feel it is important to cling to the traditions by which generations of their ancestors have survived. Unlike more "modern" people, peasants fear and resist change. They expect that tomorrow will be like today and yesterday, and they hope it will be no worse.

Consequently, in these traditional societies, as in primitive hunting-gathering bands, there is a strong tendency to revere and respect elders. Their wisdom and experience, accumulated over many years of good and bad times, provide the base of knowledge from which future generations can hope to live. Conditions vary somewhat from place to place. But a good example of this peasant existence, still the way of life for much of the world's population, could be found in the Irish countryside as it was studied a few decades ago by the anthropologist, Conrad Arensberg.

THE IRISH COUNTRYSIDE

In rural Ireland, Arensberg found a society in which younger members were expected to demonstrate their respect and submission to their elders in a variety of ways. The peasant cottages in which farm families lived were normally heated by a kitchen fireplace, near which was a "hearth seat" reserved for elders. When a father and son went to town, the son would walk close behind his father and always come to his father's side when called. If a group of elders met to talk, the young men would sit or stand in the background. They were expected to listen and learn, but not to speak unless asked. In church, the elders received communion first, then the young. As Arensberg described it, this subservient relationship of the young to the old applied everywhere. "The better cup of tea, the bigger piece of bread, the glass of whiskey, the two eggs instead of one, the pipeful of tobacco, go to the elder men."[5]

In the evening, both younger and older men would frequently gather at someone's home to socialize. But while the young men would gather to play cards, joke and talk about the next dance, the elders would meet at another home to take part in the evening *cuaird*. In the *cuaird* the elders would gossip, discuss farming, and exchange views on community affairs. These discussions functioned as an informal neighborhood government, in which the elders, who controlled the property and wealth of the community, would arrive at agreements regulating neighborhood affairs. When it was necessary for the community to deal with higher authorities, such as the national government or the church, the elder men represented the community.

Young females had different roles, but essentially acted similarly toward their elders. Girls worked closely with their mothers and learned all the duties of maintaining a household, just as the sons learned the duties of farming and managing property from their fathers. As an older couple prepared to retire, they would arrange a marriage for the son (not necessarily the oldest) to whom they planned to transfer control of the farm. These marriages were arranged by careful bargaining between the families, because the future welfare of the elders depended on successful marriages of their sons who would inherit the farms.

At the time of marriage, the bride moved into the household of her in-laws. This was often a difficult time for the young bride, who, as the "new woman" in the house, needed to be accepted by the family and learn to get along with her new "mother." One of the important ways in which the "new woman" would be judged would be her ability to bear children who could help to work the farm. As one childless and bitter woman put it:

> No matter how much money you have and how good-looking you are, if you don't have children, you're no good. But if you're ugly as the worst and have children you are all right.

When the older couple had made the decision to retire, they would transfer ownership of the farm to the married son chosen as most capable of running the farm. If the couple had sufficient wealth, other sons might be given some inheritance. The couple inheriting the farm became responsible for providing for the "old folks" as long as they might live. When control of the farm was transferred to the younger couple, the older couple would move into the "west room" of the house. In the following passage, Arensberg describes the "west room" and its significance in the Irish country cottage.

> The room...which we described as occupying the part of the rectangle behind the hearth in the kitchen is of especial interest. It may or may not be used as a bedroom. It is generally so used only when space is limited. But in this room all the objects of sentimental value (except the shrine and dresser in the kitchen) are always kept; the religious pictures, the ceremonial objects brought in by the bride at marriage, and the bric-a-brac associated with the past members of the household. Where there is only one couple in the house, this room is reserved as a sort of parlor into which none but distinguished visitors are admitted. The family heirlooms are there, and, lining the walls along with religious pictures, there appear the photographs of the members of the family, especially the familiar daguerreotypes of the last century. Whatever "fine" pieces of candlesticks are kept there, as are all the religious objects used when mass is celebrated in the house. All these objects are inalienable

in the sense that the family parts with them only when it must. They descend from father to son with the house and the farm on which it stands.

It is into this room that the old couple move upon the son's marriage. They move in among the symbols of family unity, among the religious symbols of the house, into surroundings of a certain religious or sacred character...

This room we have described is the "west room"....It is so literally. With remarkable uniformity the small farmers' houses in West and North Clare face east and west, the room behind the hearth being generally at the west end of the house. Now the west room and the western end of the house are associated in folklore with the "fairies" which still flourish in the countrymen's minds, especially among the older generation.

The Irish "fairies" include the spirits of the dead. In fact, the identity between the two is explicitly recognized. It was so at Luogh, where older men could name the "good people" with whom they had had encounters.

It is the west room and the western end of the house that fairies frequent. Where a fairy path is believed to pass the house, it passes invariably along the western end of the house. The country people of Luogh and other parts of West Clare give this as the reason why no extensions, outhouses, sheds, or other structures are built on that side; bad luck would result. In Luogh none of the twenty-five houses of the townland had any structure of any sort built there. And it is often in this room that the fairies spend the night when they visit a house on their nocturnal travels. If we remember that the old people, relinquishing their adult status and preparing for death move into this room amid heirlooms, religious pictures, and photographs of the dead members of the household, we are forced to postulate the sacred and semi-religious nature of the attitudes surrounding the old couple and identifying them with the forces of the dead and the symbolic unity of the family, past and present.[7]

Retiring to the west room did not necessarily mean that the old couple became immediately inactive. The older woman continued to help with child care and household chores, although gradually came to recognize her daughter-in-law as the new "woman of the house." A wise son would recognize the difficult transition his father was making and would handle the situation tactfully. One farmer described his handling of the problem this way:

> Every morning, even after I was married, I would go to the old man and ask him what he thought I should do for the day, and the old man would say that it is now time to do this or that or the cows should have something done for them or the garden should be prepared. I would go then and spend twenty or thirty minutes doing what the old man said, and then go about my own business.[8]

At greater length, Arensberg described the transition:

> With the transfer of land at the marriage of the son who remains to work the farm, the relations of the members of the farm family to each other and to the farm they work undergo a drastic change. In the first place, the headship of the old couple under whom the family group worked undergoes change. The old couple relinquish the farm, they enter the age grade of the dying, and direction of the enterprise of the group passes from their hands to those of the young people....From the point of view of the father, it means the abandonment of the ownership he has long enjoyed; from the point of view of the old woman, it means she is no longer the "woman of the house." Her place is taken by the incoming daughter-in-law. Naturally, this change is accomplished in effect only with difficulty and with considerable reluctance upon the part of the old couple. Where the transition goes smoothly, father and son continue to work the farm together, but more often as he grows older the father retires to his seat by the hearth. For example...one family consisting of a young man and his wife, their two children, and the old couple,...was regarded as a model of family harmony in the neighborhood. The young man did all the heavy work of the farm, but his father worked by his side. Yet the initiative in agricultural matters was clearly the young man's. The man, almost eighty, did not want to remain idle. "Time enough to sit by the fire in the winter," he would say. The greatest compliment the neighbors had for them was: "Look at the C_____s. Old Johnny gives his boy a hand with everything. You wouldn't know which one has the farm."[9]

Apparently Ireland's rural traditions have generalized to urban life, for it has been observed that the respect and consideration provided by the young for the elderly is higher in both rural and urban Ireland than it is in most other modern societies.[10]

TRADITIONAL PASTORAL TRIBES

While some people after the Neolithic Revolution concentrated on farming, others turned to raising animals. In many parts of the world today, pastoral tribes still continue to subsist by tending herds of sheep, goats, cattle or other grazing animals. Like peasants, these tribes follow very traditional ways of life that change little from generation to generation. Wealth or property is measured mainly in terms of the number of animals a family owns, rather than in terms of land holdings. While the life style is in many ways different from peasant societies, there are also many similarities, especially in the situation of elders.

THE SAMBURU

The Samburu live in Kenya. They have been studied by Paul Spencer, who describes this tribe as a "gerontocracy," meaning a society ruled by its elders. Among the Samburu, a person's position in life is determined largely by age grade, depending more on

important milestones passed rather than chronological age.

For females there are two major turning points. During adolescence (about age 12-13) a girl goes through a ceremony marking the end of her childhood. The second turning point (often at about age 17) comes when she is married. Like the Irish peasant girl, her marriage is arranged by her family, and as a young bride she goes to live with her in-laws. However, there is an important difference. The Samburu practice polygamy, a system under which a man may have as many wives as he can support. A new bride, instead of having to adjust to living with a mother-in-law, must learn to share her husband with other wives. Each wife has her own home where she lives with her children. The husband circulates from one home to another, and he is expected to give about equal time and attention to each of his wives to prevent jealousy and conflict. However, a man's first wife, usually the oldest, has more prestige because of her seniority. A husband must be careful not to show too much attention or affection toward his younger wives.

Boys also go through a ceremony at adolescence. But, rather than being considered adults, the young men become part of an age grade known as the *moran*. In addition to tending the herds of cattle, the chief task of the *moran* is to develop maturity by learning *nkanyit*, a sense of respect. It is the elders who decide when the *moran* have sufficient *nkanyit* to be allowed to marry and thus become elders themselves. This usually takes place when men are in their twenties or thirties. By controlling the time when boys become *moran* and *moran* become elders, the elders can prevent a situation in which too many elders compete for wives and cattle or too many men share positions of power and prestige. Seniority is also important within age grades. Senior *moran* hold greater prestige than new *moran*, and youthful elders do not have as much prestige as the oldest. Among the elders, the most powerful are called the "firestick elders."

One reason that young Samburu submit to the authority of the elders is that they believe elders have magic power to bless or curse their lives. The following passage illustrates what it is like to be one of the *moran*. It also illustrates the manner in which the elders control the *moran* through "harangues."

> The *moran*...are persuaded of their immaturity by the elders of their clan in public harangues, and on many informal occasions. The harangues are particularly important; perhaps ten or twenty elders and twice as many *moran* meet by arrangement, and one after another the elders, in particular the firestick elders, address the *moran*, give them moral advice, rant at them, accuse them of irresponsibility, and a lack of real respect; they make allusions to adulterous and thieving habits of the *moran*, and they remind them of their power to curse them and to bless them. These

orators are sometimes reduced to repeating one word, *nkanyit*, four or five times successively in an almost speechless fury. They pick on any defaulters, those who fail to do their duty among the *moran*, and shame them before the others. They single out the most prominent *moran* to act as spokesmen for the others, and they expect them to agree with all that is being said against them. In reply, these spokesmen admit that they, the *moran*, lack a sense of respect; they assure the elders that they will try to behave with greater respect in the future. The harangue may last several hours before the *moran* are blessed and sent away.

A typical speech by an elder during one of these harangues might run as follows. "What do you want?...What do you want?...Don't you want the advice of the elders?.... Don't you want to gain respect?...Do you want our curse?... You know what things you ought to do...We have told you many times...Why do you lurk near the settlements?...Get out to where you belong!...To your cattle camps...Why do you go looking for cattle to steal? Forget your songs and listen to the elders...Why go away stealing, when your own herds are hungry and thirsty?...Listen to us now..." etc., etc."

Privately the elders will often admit that the *moran* are really no worse than they have ever been, but they believe that such tongue-lashings are necessary to develop their sense of respect. Similarly, adults in our society also say, "Why can't kids be like we were?" and then remember that they were not exactly perfect youngsters themselves.

SOCIETIES IN TRANSITION

The primitive and traditional ways of hunter-gatherers, peasants, and pastoral tribesmen are rapidly breaking down in the twentieth century. A traveller to Africa today will find roads being cut through the forests and dotted with villages. In many of these villages he may find pygmies who have abandoned their primitive hunting bands and taken up the ways of their more "civilized" neighbors. A visitor to the Arctic is as likely to see an Eskimo riding a snowmobile as a dog sled. The transistor radio, the Polaroid camera, and the self-winding watch have found their way to the most remote villages and tribes. Under the pressures of the modern age the old ways are crumbling.

This process of modernization has had a profound influence on the position of elderly in society and on the relationships between young and old. Sister Mary Inez Hilger found this influence when she visited the Ainu people of northern Japan to record information about their ancient way of life.

AINU

Anthropologists believe that the Ainu have lived in the northern Japanese island of Hokkaido for at least 7,000 years. Traditionally, the Ainu were hunters and fishermen. After Hokkaido was taken over by the Japanese government in the nineteenth century, they were encouraged to become farmers. Gradually the Ainu intermarried with the Japanese settlers until they almost ceased to exist as a separate people. Of more than five million people on Hokkaido today, only about 300 full-blooded Ainu remain. Some are trying desperately to carry on their ancient culture, but they are fighting a losing battle. Sister Mary described the situation:

> ...As I looked at the quiet eyes and wrinkled hands of an elderly, tattooed grandmother, I realized that with the passing of her generation, the Ainu as a separate people will disappear. Younger Ainu parents want to fit in with their Japanese neighbors; teen-agers scorn the customs of their grandparents as quaint superstitions, and children are almost unaware of their heritage.
>
> The older Ainu, saddened by this generation gap, carry on alone. Tsurukichi Seki and his wife Riyo invited me to their home in the Mukawa Valley to meet some of the older women in the community. A single bulb hung from an electric cord, casting a dim yellow glow throughout the room.
>
> "Electricity has not come to part of the valley," Tsu ichi said, "but in our home we have generated it ours es by windmill power since 1959, and we store the exces in batteries. Until recently four bulbs burned in this room; now we use only one because our batteries are low and growing old."
>
> "Just as we are," added Riyo.[12]

Ainu traditions have been passed on by word of mouth from generation to generation since before anyone can remember, but today only the grandparents speak the Ainu language. Only these elderly Ainu are really familiar with the songs, poems, chants and legends which contain Ainu traditions. Once they would have been taught to all the children. Today, the children are required to go to modern schools where they learn the dominant Japanese language and culture.

> Today the young learn not only from their parents and grandparents, but also from teachers in Japanese schools. I watched Ainu and Japanese children playing together in harmony and teachers conducting classes without distinction between the two groups.
>
> Ainu teen-agers seem embarrassed to talk about the old ways of their grandparents. Although they feel distressed because the young people have departed from tradition, the elders carry on their customs as best they can, sadly accepting the change...

Today Ainu and Japanese live and work together. They belong to the same fishing cooperatives, pooling their resources for modern boats and equipment. The trout, salmon, herring, flounder, squid, and crabs, which Ainu in dugout canoes used to catch with spears and nets, still flourish in the waters off Hokkaido and provide the island with a major source of revenue.

As the Ainu people blend into the Japanese scene, their culture attracts more and more attention. Anthropologists will always wonder who they were and from whence they came.[13]

CROSS-CULTURAL THEORIES OF AGING

Throughout most of human history, elders have taught the young. Since change was extremely slow, a young person could look toward the elders as the model for the future. What elders knew, the young needed to know. What elders experienced, the young would eventually experience themselves. Today this is no longer true. All over the world, change is taking place at a rapid pace, and the role of grandparents and elders has had to change to fit a world in which tradition seems to stand in the way of "progress." The late Margaret Mead discussed this problem in her book, *Family*:

> Today, in a time of worldwide, bewildering change, grandparents appear to have lost their traditional conserving role. All over the world young people are pressing toward new ways, pouring into the cities, shedding traditional garments and ways of behaving, substituting for them new clothes, new foods, new equipment, new furniture, new kinds of housing, and a new vocabulary related to new behavior. Alarmed by the overwhelming pressure for change, grandparents may raise an outcry against the new, and young people, fearing the counter pressures of the past, may feel that their only hope of success in making a new life depends on their leaving the village, the region, the tight caste-bound group, the little religious community, even the country of their birth, for some far-off place. Yet the security given them by their grandparents stands them in good stead when they have left their parents behind and, having broken their ties to the past, try to bring up their children in unaccustomed ways.
>
> Sometimes the habit of moving as far away as possible from the old-fashioned grandparents will hold for several generations until, for a given family, the pace of change has slowed down. Then, as the gap between father and son, mother and daughter narrows, young parents find it easier to live closer to their parents with whom they once more share a familiar world. When this happens, grown sons and daughters have established their freedom to court mates of their own choice, make their own political decisions, seek a different religious faith, and bring up their children in

modern ways--and grandparents have accepted the break with the traditional past.

In societies where these battles have been largely won, grandparents are acquiring a new role. Instead of being the most conservative, cautious members of the group, they represent through their own experience those who best understand change. Where they themselves have been the immigrants --the very people who moved from the country to the city, crossed the sea to a new country, went to school although no one of their ancestors had learned to read, became familiar travelers on trains and ships, in automobiles and airplanes, learned to use the telephone, listen to the radio, and enjoy television--they are living proof that the human race is capable of changing rapidly and surviving intact.

A grandmother who started life wearing a grass skirt and who now wears a well-cut modern dress and stands in line, wallet in hand, to pay her school tax, is a living refutation of the belief that individuals cannot reorganize their lives with sufficient speed to keep up with the accelerating pace of change. After the holocaust of World War II it was the old men in the devastated countries of Europe--the men who had lived through the extraordinary changes of more than half a century--who were able to lead, while their grandchildren were learning enough to become part of the new age into which they were born. Grandparents, who once were the conservators of the past for the future, now have become those who best know how to prepare their grandchildren for innovation and change.

Yet, essentially, their new role enables contemporary grandparents to carry out their age-old function of teaching their grandchildren how the whole of life is lived to its conclusion--in the past by running exactly the same course that one's father had run, and today by a readiness to run each day, each week, each year a new and untried course.[14]

Margaret Mead, who spent more than half a century studying cultures, categorizes all societies into three broad types according to the way in which elders relate to the society. These three general categories are postfigurative, cofigurative, and prefigurative. Postfigurative societies are those in which elders set the model for the society as in those primitive and traditional societies described earlier.

Cofigurative societies are those in which both children and adults model their behavior after their peers, of which nineteenth century immigrants from eastern Europe settling in America are an example. In the new environment, the elders were no longer regarded by the young as models for their own behavior. Instead, the immigrant children tended to look more to their peers in American society for clues on how to dress, what to say, what to eat, and how to act.

Prefigurative culture is essentially an intensification of the cofigurative pattern to the point where the young, to a very high degree, become the models for the society. According to Dr. Mead, this change toward prefigurative patterns is being experienced all over the world and has resulted in a worldwide generaion gap.

> Today, nowhere in the world are there elders who know what the children know, no matter how remote and simple the societies are in which the children live. In the past there were always some elders who knew more than any children in terms of their experience of having grown up within a cultural system. Today there are none. It is not only that parents are no longer guides, but that there are no guides, whether one seeks them in one's own country or abroad. There are no elders who know what those who have been reared within the last twenty years know about the world into which they were born.[15]

This is the heart of the generation gap. On one hand, the young are unable to accept the elders as models. On the other hand, the elders fail to understand that they cannot transmit their own experience to the young, and that even if they could, it would have no value in terms of the particular changes the young will experience in their own lifetimes. Unfortunately, a lack of respect and communication between generations often results.

While older people may not be able to transmit valuable help based on their particular experiences, they may help young people to cope with change in general. Today's older people know more about the meaning of change than any people who have ever lived. Americans who today have reached the age of sixty-five have survived two world wars, the Korean conflict, and the war in Southeast Asia. They have lived through the great depression of the 1930s and the affluence of the 1960s. They have witnessed the growth of the motion picture, automobile, aircraft, radio and television industries, not to mention nuclear weapons and the exploration of outer space.

But none of these historic changes has affected their lives as much as the less obvious changes transforming American society. Changes in the family, improvements in medical care, the growth of mechanization and automation, the decline of the cities, the rise of public education, the increasing cost of living--these are the kinds of changes that have shaped the world with which today's older, as well as younger, Americans must cope.

As we move toward the twenty-first century we, like people around the world, can expect these subtle changes to continue to shape the world in which all of us are growing older. Experience does not necessarily bring wisdom, but wisdom is difficult to acquire any other way. If we can learn anything from our elders,

perhaps the most important thing we can learn is how to deal with change.

Margaret Mead's theory that all societies can be categorized as postfigurative, cofigurative, and prefigurative was expressed in broad generalizations based on more than forty years of experience studying and comparing cultures. A more particular and detailed cross-cultural theory of aging has been set forth by Donald Cowgill and Lowell D. Holmes. Their theory has not been fully tested, but serves as a basis for further cross-cultural study. After preliminary testing, the revised theory of Cowgill and Holmes produced a list of universals shared by all cultures and a list of variations linked to modernization.[16]

UNIVERSALS

1. The aged always constitute a minority within the total population.

2. In an older population, females outnumber males.

3. Widows comprise a high proportion of an older population.

4. In all societies, some people are classified as old and are treated differently because they are so classified.

5. There is a widespread tendency for people defined as old to shift to more sedentary, advisory, or supervisory roles involving less physical exertion and more concerned with group maintenance than with economic production.

6. In all societies, some old persons continue to act as political, judicial, and civic leaders.

7. In all societies, the mores prescribe some mutual responsibility between old people and their adult children.

8. All societies value life and seek to prolong it, even in old age.

VARIATIONS

1. The concept of old age is relative to the degree of modernization; a person is classified as old at an earlier chronological age in a primitive society than in a modern society.

2. Old age is identified in terms of chronological age chiefly in modern societies; in other societies onset of old age is more commonly linked with events such as succession to eldership or becoming a grandparent.

3. Longevity is directly and significantly related to the degree of modernization.

4. Modernized societies have older populations, i.e. higher proportions of old people.

5. Modern societies have higher proportions of women and especially of widows.

6. Modern societies have higher proportions of people who live to be grandparents and even great-grandparents.

7. The status of the aged is high in primitive societies and is lower and more ambiguous in modern societies.

8. In primitive societies, older people tend to hold positions of political and economic power, but in modern societies such power is possessed by only a few.

9. The status of the aged is high in societies in which there is a high reverence for or worship of ancestors.

10. The status of the aged is highest when they constitute a low proportion of the population and tends to decline as their numbers and proportions increase.

11. The status of the aged is inversely proportional to the rate of social change.

12. Stability of residence favors high status of the aged; mobility tends to undermine it.

13. The status of the aged tends to be high in agricultural societies and lower in urbanized societies.

14. The status of the aged tends to be high in preliterate societies and to decline with increasing literacy of the populations.

15. The status of the aged is high in those societies in which they are able to continue to perform useful and valued functions; however, this is contingent upon the values of the society as well as upon the specific activities of the aged.

16. Retirement is a modern invention; it is found chiefly in modern high-productivity societies.

17. The status of the aged is high in societies in which the extended form of the family is prevalent and tends to be lower in societies which favor the nuclear form of the family and neolocal marriage.

18. With modernization the responsibility for the provision of economic security for dependent aged tends to be shifted from the family to the state.

19. The proportion of the aged who are able to maintain leadership roles declines with modernization.

20. In primitive societies the roles of widows tend to be clearly ascribed, but such role ascription declines with modernization; the widow's role in modern societies tends to be flexible and ambiguous.

21. The individualistic value system of western society tends to reduce the security and status of older people.

22. Disengagement is not characteristic of the aged in primitive or agrarian societies, but an increasing tendency toward disengagement appears to accompany modernization.

CROSS-CULTURAL THEORY APPLIED TO THE UNITED STATES

Clearly the message of Cowgill and Holmes is that while modernization allows people to live longer and to enjoy benefits, such as retirement, it also diminishes the overall situation of the elderly within society. If the theory holds true, it should help to explain what has happened to the elderly in our own country as it has progressed from a rural-based to an urban-based super-industrialized nation.

David Hackett Fischer, a well-known social historian, has studied the changing role of the elderly in American society from colonial times to the present.[17] According to Fischer, the elderly in colonial America were not only respected, but venerated. Not just those elders who held the chief positions of religious and political leadership, but all old people were given special consideration. For example, church seating was assigned with the oldest members of the congregation near the pulpit with the rest of the church generally seated according to age behind them. A large body of literature was written during this period to advise young people on proper behavior to exhibit toward elders. In fact, it was a Puritan belief that respect of the young for the old was an innate instinct, a natural law which any young person would by nature obey.

The veneration of age continued through the colonial period and increased to the point where people not only venerated age but emulated it. The powdering of hair and wearing of white wigs is an example of this effort by the young to appear older.

When and how, then, did the change in age relations come about? According to Fischer, the change was not brought about by "modernization" in the twentieth century sense of industrialization and urbanization. He presents convincing evidence that the change in age relations began in the half century between 1770 and 1820, roughly the period of the American Revolution and establishment of the republic. The evidence indicates that the reaction against age and the elderly was part of the general revolutionary spirit of the times. Since elders largely controlled society in terms of politics, religion and property ownership, it was natural for a revolt against the "establishment" to carry with it a reaction against age itself.

The new attitudes toward age and the elderly were manifested in many ways. Instead of powdered hair or wigs, toupees and dyed hair became fashionable ways to disguise one's age. Clothing previously tailored to make one look old was now tailored to create a youthful appearance. Prior to this time, adults often claimed to be older than they were, but now people often claimed to be younger. Seating by age in the meeting house was abandoned; instead, pews were put up for auction with the best seats going to the highest bids in support of the church. Terms of respect for older people became pejorative expressions, and some new terms of disrespect came into use. "Gaffer," a term of endearment contracted from "grandfather" or "godfather," became a term of contempt. "Fogy," which had referred to a wounded military veteran, became a disrespectful term for an elderly man. Other opprobrious terms appeared --"old goat," "fuddy-duddy," "geezer," "galoot," and "baldy." Henry David Thoreau expressed the new attitude of the young when, in 1847, at age thirty, he wrote:

> I have lived some thirty years on this planet, and I have yet to hear the first syllable of valuable or even earnest advice from my seniors. They have told me nothing and probably cannot teach me anything.[18]

The revolution in age relations grew through the nineteenth and twentieth century into a "cult of youth." Gerontophobia, fear of aging, took many forms and spread to all age groups in society, including the elderly. Although the average age of workers increased steadily as the general population grew older, discrimination against older workers began, which eventually led to a widespread practice of mandatory retirement, meaning mandatory poverty for many older workers.

The old system of family responsibility for the aged began to break down. The early nineteenth century witnessed the establishment of the first "old age homes," for people of the upper middle

class. By the end of the century, throughout the country there were old age homes, or "poor houses," under a variety of names, for old people unable to provide for themselves who had no one else to provide for them. Literature no longer assigned active and attractive roles to older characters. When older characters did appear, they were often treated as objects of pity or contempt.

The cult of youth affected the behavior of older people as well as young. Even when people did not lie about their age, a kind of denial of age became common in such expressions as: "You're only as old as you feel," or "I'm sixty years young." Fischer described some extreme, but not uncommon, manifestations of the cult of youth among older people:

> A cult of youth developed in America during the nineteenth century and grew rapidly in the twentieth. It became most extreme in the 1960's, when mature men and women followed fashions in books, music and clothing which were set by their adolescent children. This historian observed a Boston matron on the far side of fifty, who might have worn a graceful palla in ancient Rome, dressed in a mini-skirt and leather boots. He saw a man in his sixties who might have draped himself in the dignity of a toga, wearing "hiphugger" jeans and a tie-dyed T-shirt. He witnessed a conservative businessman, who in an earlier generation might have hesitated each morning, wondering whether to wear black or charcoal grey, going to the office in white plastic shoes, chartreuse trousers and cerise shirt, purple aviator glasses, and a Prince Valiant haircut. Most astonishing were college professors who put aside their Harris tweeds and adopted every passing adolescent fad with an enthusiasm out of all proportion to their years. One season it was the Nehru jacket; another, dashikis; the next, railroad overalls. In the early 1970's it was love beads and leather jackets. Every twist and turn of teen-age fashion revolutionized their costumes. But always, old was out and young was in. There was a pathos in those scenes--because the worshippers of youth succeeded only in displaying their age.[19]

Even the term "old" seemed to be taking on a new meaning, at least in the minds of older people. A survey made in Elmira, New York, showed that only one-third of the people over sixty who were interviewed considered themselves "old;" two-thirds thought of themselves as "middle-aged." [20]

In Margaret Mead's terms, American society had moved into the prefigurative stage. The situation of the elderly in America in the twentieth century also fits the description by Cowgill and Holmes for aging in modernized societies. It is only the cause of this revolution that is open to question. David Hackett Fischer convincingly argues that it has not been brought about by modernization *per se*, but that it grew out of the revolutionary era of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

In terms of United States history, it is important to understand that the revolution in age relations was underway 200 years ago, long before the growth of factories and cities. The same could be said for other Western nations that were part of the same revolutionary tradition. Here the development of a modern urban-industrial-commercial society served to accelerate the revolution in age relations which was already under way. In other countries, where the processes of urbanization and industrialization are relatively new, we can see the revolution in age relations beginning to take place. In these situations, modernization seems to be the major cause.

No matter how it comes about, the end results for society and particularly for the elderly are much the same. By examining these issues from a historical/anthropological approach, one can recognize that there is no "natural" or universal pattern of aging and age relations for a society. To recognize variations is to acknowledge options.

One characteristic of humanity is the ability to make choices and act upon them--to shape the social environment, not simply to be shaped by it. Modernization may inevitably have an impact on age relations and the situation of the elderly within society. But a society can consciously establish policies that will minimize the detrimental effects and capitalize on the benefits that modernization can bring for members of society of all ages.

MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT AGE AND CULTURE

MYTH: Except for superficial differences, the process of growing older is much the same the world over.

FACT: In cultural terms, there are very significant differences from one society to another in the way people age. The status of people at different stages of life varies considerably, as does the society's expectations of them. Adolescents may be consumers or producers. Young adults may enjoy maximum freedom or live under severe restraint. Elders may be honored or despised. There is no universal pattern of aging that fits all cultures.

MYTH: Among primitive peoples, elders were considered a burden and were usually abandoned when they became very old.

FACT: In most primitive societies studied, elders were treated with great respect, and they were often given special roles reserved only for people of their age grade. In some primitive cultures, it was possible for a person to reach a stage of "superannuation" in which one was regarded as being too old to be of any use. Sometimes,

at this stage, the aged person might commit suicide. The practice of geronticide, abandonment of elders, was not typical. It was done only when the survival of the group was at stake and was usually accompanied by great sorrow and regret on the part of the survivors.

MYTH: Naturally, people have always worshipped youth and dreaded growing old.

FACT: In many societies, including our own in colonial times, people often claimed or pretended to be older than they were. The respect, privileges and special roles reserved for elders sometimes made old age seem a desirable time of life. In our own country there was once a "cult of age" just as more recently there has been a "cult of youth," but neither cult is "natural."

MYTH: As people have become more civilized, the situation of all people, including the elderly, has improved.

FACT: In the material sense, modern industrial societies have vastly improved living conditions for people of all ages. However, the patterns of culture in modern commercial/industrial societies sometimes work to the disadvantage of elders in terms of their status, role and security. In general, kinship ties are strongest in traditional or primitive cultures, and elders who need assistance in modern societies are more likely to have to depend on impersonal and institutionalized sources of help.

ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

1. Form a cross-cultural panel to discuss patterns of aging in other cultures. The panel might consist of any combination of foreigners or people of foreign background who are available in the area, such as immigrants, visiting professors at nearby colleges or foreign exchange students. Prior to meeting with the panel, the class should formulate questions that will reveal cultural differences. These might include questions about stages in the life cycle, rites of passage, roles of people at different ages, use of language (as terms used to address people of different ages, terms of respect or humor) or current changes in age relations as compared with the past. Following the panel discussion, continue to discuss how the characteristics of these other cultures compare with patterns of culture in the United States.

2. Assign each student to locate a book describing another culture. Include primitive and traditional societies as well as modern

ones. Using the index and table of contents, ask each student to gather as much information as possible on matters related to aging and the life cycle. Tell them to bring their notes to class and discuss their findings topic by topic, such as child rearing, courtship and marriage or role of elders. Again, discuss the information in comparison to American cultural patterns.

3. There have been several republications in recent years of old mail order catalogs, such as Sears Roebuck catalogs from 1895 or 1932. If they are available from the library or from students' homes, ask students to examine the contents in terms of the products available for people of different ages and the changes in product availability over time. They may be surprised, for example, to find that there was no "toy section" in early mail order catalogs. Discuss the significance in terms of age relations of changes the students find.

4. Ask students to bring in family portraits from modern times back as far as possible. Examine the portraits in terms of the placement of children, parents, and grandparents. Are parents and grandparents placed at the ends or in the center of the groups? Do they stand above, or sit below the children? Are grandparents absent from recent pictures? Are there any discernible patterns, either for particular time periods or as patterns of change over time? What do the patterns seem to indicate about age relations?

5. Identify the oldest people in the community available to carry on a conversation. Arrange for interviews in which students ask what these people remember from their own youth, and what they remember being told about the youth of their own parents or grandparents. Students should phrase questions to provide information about age relations and the roles of youth and elders in different historical periods.

USEFUL TERMS FOR STUDENTS TO KNOW

AGE GRADE: A stage in the cultural life cycle shared by a group of roughly the same age

ANCESTOR: One from whom a person is descended

ANTHROPOLOGY: The study of human development and culture

CALENDRICAL AGE: Age according to a calendar as opposed to a role

CULTURE: A way of life

ELDER: In general, simply an old person but in many cultures a person who has significant authority because of advanced age

GERONTICIDE: The killing of the old and infirm, usually to enable the group to survive

GERONTOCRACY: The domination or control of society by elders

GERONTOPHOBIA: Fear of aging or of the old

KINSHIP: State of being related biologically, by marriage or by adoption

RITE OF PASSAGE: The process or ceremony by which a person advances from one age grade or status to another

SENIORITY: The principle of reserving certain rights or privileges to those who are older or have the longest involvement

TRADITION: A way of doing things that is based on what has been done in the past, a custom

VENERATION: The displaying of great respect or even worship

RECOMMENDED READINGS

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FOUR. ECONOMICS OF AGING

"Youth is a thing of beauty. Age is a work of art."
--Anonymous

The media have so emphasized the "plight of the elderly" that it is easy to get the impression that poverty is the normal situation for older people today. The truth is that the vast majority of older Americans, like Americans of all ages, live in an affluent society and share its material abundance. Most older citizens enjoy decent housing, food, clothing, medical care and other basic necessities, with a reasonable share of "non-necessities" to boot. From an economic standpoint, many have never lived so well. They have raised their children, their mortgages are paid, they have accumulated considerable savings and assets, and they have an adequate pension or other retirement income. For the first time, they are truly free to travel and pursue their own interests and hobbies and are free from worry about the responsibilities of work and family.

Even for those less well off, there has been considerable improvement in recent years. Social Security benefits have increased significantly and now provide automatic cost of living increases. The introduction of Medicare and Medicaid have greatly reduced payments for medical services. Laws have been passed on both federal and state levels to provide tax breaks of various kinds for older citizens. There has been a proliferation of new services for the elderly provided by both government and private agencies, such as subsidized housing, meals, homecare services and transportation. Many private businesses now offer substantial discounts to senior citizens.

In spite of all that is being done, the fact remains that the chances of being poor are much greater for the elderly than they are for the population at large. When we read that about one out of four elderly people, according to United States Government standards, is either "poor" or "near poor," there are three things we should keep in mind. First, since three out of four do not fall into these categories, poverty is not the typical situation of older people. Second, while one out of four is a minority, it is a very large minority of elderly poor, including about six million people. Third, while only one out of ten in the general population lives in poverty, the figure climbs to one out of four for the elderly. It therefore seems that the economic plight of those six million people must in some way be related to their age.

The reason for this lies, at least partially, in the revolutionary changes that have been taking place in American society in this century. In addition to the shift from the multi-generation to the nuclear family, a most important development is the demise of both the family farm and the ethnic urban neighborhood.

ELDERLY POOR IN RURAL AREAS

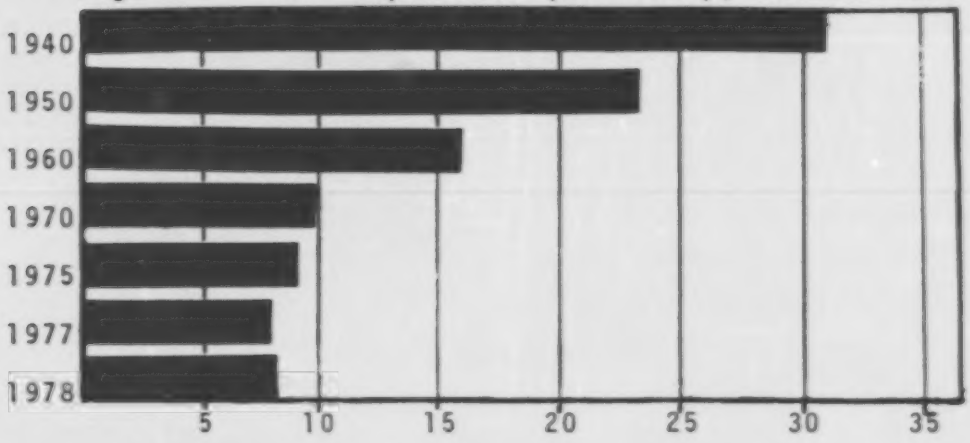
Throughout the nineteenth century the United States was basically a nation of farmers. Although factories began to develop early in the nineteenth century, as late as 1900 half the American people still lived and worked on farms. Most were family farms. Typically there was a single homestead surrounded by fields that were worked by the family, sometimes with seasonal hired help. The family was a productive economic unit in which each member depended on the others for survival. Frequently the family unit included grandparents or other aged relatives. When the young did strike out on their own, they often purchased farms in the same community or nearby. Thus, even if they did not live together, members of all generations maintained regular contact.

With the development of more scientific farming and mechanization, it became possible for a very small part of the nation's work force to produce enough food to feed the nation and to produce sizable surpluses for sale abroad. As a result, small family farms in recent decades have rapidly declined in favor of large commercial farms, and people have moved out of rural areas to cities and suburbs to seek jobs in business and industry. Between 1950 and 1978, farm employment fell from almost 10 million to under 4 million workers, less than two per cent of the nation's total population.

Sometimes whole families leave the farm together, but more often people leave one by one. The young find it easiest to move and have the most reason to do so. Many older people, even when they can move, have no motivation to leave. Millions of these older people can still be found tied to the old homesteads; many of them are living out their remaining years in isolation and poverty. With their children and grandchildren scattered around the country, they lack the support that family once provided. The dramatic decrease in farm population is graphically illustrated in Figure 1 below.

Probably not much has changed since the 1971 White House Conference on Aging report which stated that one-third of all elderly persons in rural areas were living in poverty, as compared to 25 per cent in central cities and 17 per cent in suburban areas. Nearly a third of the men and about 70 per cent of the women had less than $2000 annual income. Although

Figure 1. Farm Population (millions), 1940 to 1978



Source: *Statistical Abstract, 1979*, p. 678.

average annual income may be somewhat higher now, the inflation factor probably means there has been no fundamental change. The special conditions of rural America were described in the report:

> Growing older in rural America presents special and unique problems...Sheer distance between people, and between people and services, is the most obvious aspect in which rural areas differ from urban ones. Distance complicates the delivery of any service to rural older people; the expense of maintaining private cars and lack of transportation bar people from coming to the services. Many people, in rural areas, are isolated by a more basic lack of roads. Rural transportation problems must be solved before there can be effective solutions to rural health, income, employment or housing problems.
>
> Another unique aspect of growing older in rural America is that a large proportion of the neighbors are also old. Nationally, one out of every ten of our citizens is old; in rural counties that ratio is often one in five. As the younger people are forced to leave to find jobs, they leave a shrinking tax base and a growing scarcity of services. Rising property and sales taxes in rural areas are becoming increasingly oppressive to older rural people.
>
> Retirement income is lower in rural areas, too. Few workers in rural areas are covered by private pension plans. Income in their later years must come from Social Security, from savings, from continued employment or from welfare. Since most rural people became eligible for Social Security relatively recently when agricultural workers and the self-employed were included, they have had fewer years of covered earnings, and thus their benefits are lower.

Although older rural people are accustomed to working, there is a critical shortage of paid jobs for those who wish to work. Many urgently need work because of low income, yet present federal programs discriminate against rural areas. Rural areas have one-third of the poverty in this country, yet they get only 16 per cent of federal manpower funds.

National programs designed to provide part-time community service work for older rural people, such as Green Thumb and Green Light (founded under Operation Mainstream), have found that the opportunity to serve and also earn is eagerly welcomed by rural older folk.

Programs established to meet the needs of the elderly in rural areas and small towns should be designed to fit their way of living. Most rural people have been very self-reliant all their lives. They were their own mechanics, plumbers, carpenters, doctors--because there often were no others. When crises came, neighbors quietly chipped in, often without being asked. Age has now stripped them of their resources but not their traditions. Many refuse to take advantage of the few services which are available because they don't know how to take the initiative in dealing with "government officials," and they feel a strong sense of shame and failure if they try. Programs must be designed to seek out needs, not merely respond to demand. They must deal with the rural elderly in ways which are not frightening or foreign to them. Older people need to be involved in designing, planning, and implementing these programs.[1]

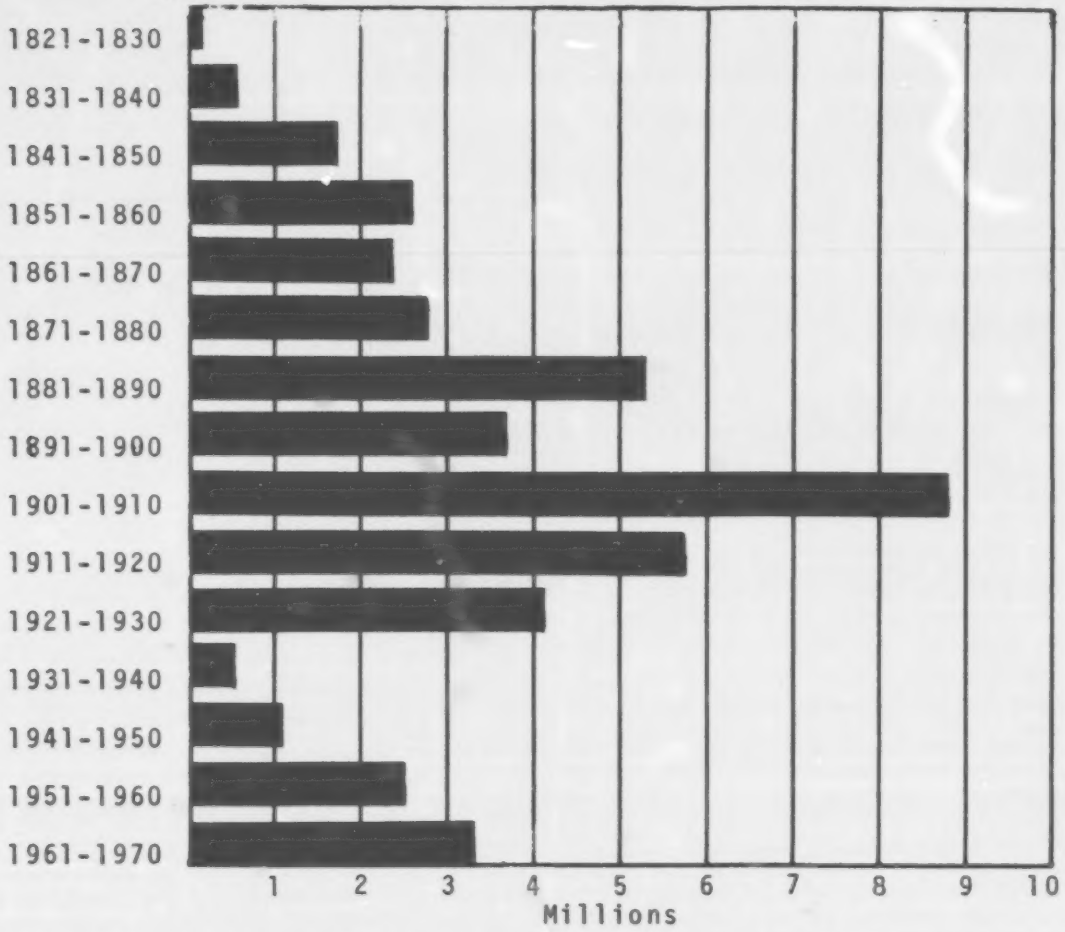
THE URBAN POOR

The demise of the family farm contributed to the rise of the city. Cities also grew because of the vast numbers of immigrants pouring into the United States until Congress passed restrictive immigration laws in the 1920's. Figure 2 below shows the level of immigration by decades from 1821-1970. The newcomers from other lands formed ethnic neighborhoods where people found security among others who shared their language and culture in the strange new surroundings.

For these ethnic groups, family bonds were especially important. Those who arrived early in the United States encouraged their relatives to come, often helping to finance their voyages and aiding them in getting established in their adopted land. Within ethnic communities, not only parents and their children, but also uncles, aunts, grandparents, and cousins lived within a few blocks of each other or even in the same building. Like the extended families of rural America, members of these families enjoyed daily communication and supported one another in a variety of ways.

Following World War II, personal income rose to the point where the average worker could afford to own not only a car, but

Figure 2. Immigration to the United States 1821-1970



Source: Based on statistics from *Statistical Abstract, 1974*, p. 97.

even a home. American population shifted again, and the "flight" to the suburbs" was under way. Again it was the young who found it easiest to leave and establish themselves in the more affluent suburbs. Again the family felt the impact. The older people who stayed behind soon found themselves in deteriorating urban environments where property values dropped, services became poor, taxes climbed and crime was on the rise.

While urban populations as a whole continue to increase, many cities have had a decline in population since the 1950s. Table I illustrates the rise and fall in population in a number of United States cities from 1920 to 1970. One example is San Francisco where one-fifth of the population is now over sixty.

TABLE I. POPULATION CHANGE IN SELECTED CITIES, 1920-1970

City	1920	1940	1960	1970
Birmingham, AL	178,806	267,583	340,887	300,910
Boston, MA	748,060	770,816	697,197	641,071
Camden, NJ	116,309	117,536	117,159	102,551
Charleston, WV	39,608	67,914	85,796	71,505
Cleveland, OH	796,841	878,336	876,050	750,903
Detroit, MI	993,678	1,623,452	1,670,144	1,511,482
Gary, IN	55,378	111,719	178,320	175,415
Milwaukee, WS	457,147	587,472	741,324	717,099
Minneapolis, MN	380,582	492,370	482,872	434,400
Pittsburgh, PA	588,343	671,659	604,332	520,117
Portland, ME	69,272	73,643	72,566	65,116
Providence, RI	237,595	253,504	207,498	179,213
St. Louis, MO	772,897	816,048	750,026	622,236
San Francisco, CA	506,676	634,536	740,316	715,674
Syracuse, NY	171,717	205,967	216,038	197,208
Wilmington, DE	110,168	112,504	95,827	80,386

Source: Selected from *Information Please Almanac, 1972*, pp. 621-625. (Original Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census)

Today almost 7 million elderly people live in central cities, more than live in either rural or suburban areas. The population as a whole, by contrast, is now concentrated mainly in the suburbs. For many old people in the cities, like many of the rural elderly, isolation, loneliness and poverty have become the dreary routine of life. What all too often happens to elderly residents of the city when neither the family nor the community assumes responsibility is illustrated in the case of Henry Schultz.

Case 6. Henry Schultz

BALTIMORE -- The morning sun filtered through the grimy windows of the tenements on graceless St. Paul Street and into the third floor room where Henry Schultz, seventy-five, was beginning to stir under the beige acrylic carpeting that he uses for a blanket.

For Mr. Schultz and millions of other Americans who survive on meager Social Security checks, this is the difficult time of the month, the fourth week, because that is when they run out of money.

Until his check arrives next week, Mr. Schultz has no sheet on his bed, no blanket to cover himself, no underwear and no clean shirt because they are in the laundry and he does not have the money to get them out.

The only food he had was a half-bottle of ketchup, a bit of mayonnaise and a half-cup of margarine.

He dressed quickly in his only pair of trousers, put on his only jacket, and left early for the one-mile walk to the Franciscan Center, embarrassed that once again he had to beg for food from the nuns.

Mr. Schultz is small, timid, friendly, thin and toothless, with wispy white hair, recessed eyes, and hollow cheeks, an old man who has been isolated from American affluence into a bare, lonely, degraded existence.

Ironically, in a nation where 70 million people are overweight because they eat too much, and where $1.5 billion is spent yearly for dog and cat food, Mr. Schultz does not get enough to eat. He is not the only one. There are an estimated 24 million Americans, Blacks, Indians, rural whites and elderly people in cities, who worry every day whether they'll have enough food.

We do not see them often because they are secluded in the shanties on the dirt roads in the South, or banished to Indian reservations in the West, or hidden in the rundown tenements of Eastern cities.

Somehow, the great social reforms of the Sixties, the New Frontier, the Great Society and the Wars on Hunger and Poverty never fulfilled the promises of the politicians and, as a result, people like Mr. Schultz are still hungry.

Mr. Schultz does not live in a world of new automobiles, the latest chic movies or Halloween children filling their shopping bags with more candy than they can eat.

He cooks on his one-burner hot plate, scours the neighborhood rubbish cans for anything usable and worries constantly about the aggressive young toughs who loiter and drink on the front steps of his tenement.

Mr. Schultz is not an exception. Of 37 million eligible Americans, only 13 million participate in the Food Stamp program. Congress appropriated $5 billion this year to feed the poor in America, but Mr. Schultz and 24 million other Americans, for a variety of reasons, do not receive food stamps.

Critics say the Agriculture Department and Secretary Earl Butz have ignored a Congressional directive to encourage eligible Americans to participate.

When the Agriculture Department attempted this year to return to the Treasury $280 million in unspent Food Stamp funds, a federal judge intervened, noting that only $80,000 had been spent nationally on outreach programs.

Mr. Schultz sat in Sister Christopher's office and described his efforts to apply for food stamps.

"When I first went there, the man said that he'd call and let me know, but I've waited almost a year now. Every time I go back there to ask, they've got a new man."

Last month, Mr. Schultz received $141 from Social Security. After he had paid his $54 monthly rent and costs for electricity, medicine, accident insurance, laundry and the Beech-Nut tobacco he likes to chew, he had less than $2 a day to spend on food, clothing, entertainment and transportation.

"Fortunately, Mr. Schultz does not drink," said Sister Christopher.

"I seen too many drunks lying on the street," he said.

Enroute back to his apartment, Mr. Schultz explained that crime was a constant problem in his neighborhood, particularly during the first week of the month. Mr. Schultz has been mugged twice.

A few weeks ago, right after his check arrived, Mr. Schultz was returning from the grocery store when two teenagers jumped on him, beat him and robbed him of $10 in cash and $10 in groceries. That destroyed his monthly budget.

"Am I all set for winter? Well, I need an overcoat so I'm going to the pawnshop where it don't cost so much. Five dollars is the most I'd pay for it."

Mr. Schultz explained that he was born in Baltimore but had never gone to school and could not read. "In them days, they didn't care," he said. He had been a painter until muggers broke his hip a few years ago. Both his wives were dead, he said, and he hadn't heard from his stepchildren in many years.

Mr. Schultz climbed the three flights of the stairs, past the dark, stinking hallways, past the walls with the peeling paint and past the rooms where anonymous old men sat too close to their television sets which blasted forth the banalities of daytime television. Several of them had left their doors open, hoping that someone might visit.

"Usually I try to get two meals a day," he said. "But this month has been tough. The man next door gets food stamps and if I let him use my hot plate, sometimes he gives me some food. But I don't like to chisel from him.

"Yesterday, Sister gave me a can of turkey rice soup and a small can of beans, but I don't like to go to the nuns either, 'cause it don't feel right. Sure I get hungry. I could eat more, but what can you do?"

His large room is lighted by two bare light bulbs that do not always work. From his window, he can look across St. Paul Street to a Gino's Hamburger and Kentucky Fried Chicken stand.

The room is furnished like a million other lonely rooms, with a nondescript bureau and a torn stuffed chair. His kitchen is the top of a small table covered with newspaper on which he has placed the hot plate, his meager food and an empty saucepan with the $1.59 sticker still on the handle.

For several weeks, he has been keeping a stray dog named Teeney, which survives on a third of a can of dog food a day.

"I know he's lonesome like I am," said Mr. Schultz, as he spooned out some Alpo food for the dog. The landlord, however, has told him to get rid of the dog.

"What do I do for pleasure? Well, sometimes my neighbor comes in and brings his radio. For fun, I take a walk with Teeney or I sit in the park. Sometimes I sit at that table by the window and I play--what do you call it?--solitaire."

On the floor near his bed was a pair of women's overshoes, a bit damaged, but usable.

"Are you going back to the Franciscan Center?" he asked.

"Yes," said his visitor.

"Would you do me a favor? I found these boots in a rubbish barrel. Would you give them to Sister Christopher? She might know someone who needs them.[2]

ISOLATION FACTORS

Obviously older people cannot play a significant role in a community from which they are isolated. When older Americans were asked whether they would prefer to spend most of their time with people of their own age or with people of all ages, about three fourths (74%) of them said they would prefer contact with all ages.[3] But there is a wide gap between what most older people want and what really happens. Besides factors already mentioned, there are a number of other reasons for the isolation of millions of elderly people from the community-at-large.

One important factor is housing. There are five million older Americans who live alone, many of them almost completely cut off from the community around them. As one writer described their situation:

> ...The phone does not ring, there are no visitors, there are no invitations, there are no easy, affordable ways to secure transportation to a senior center, a civic program or even to market. There are no incentives to action.[4]

Especially in the city, one of the chief factors that keeps older people confined in their rooms or apartments is fear of crime. Bernard Warach, Director of the Jewish Association for Services to the Aged in New York City reported,

> Many of these people live in a harrowing state of isolation and fear....The shops and services they knew are gone. As the streets become more dangerous, they tend to lock themselves in their apartments, neglecting nourishment, health care and hygiene. The recent rash of murders and muggings of the elderly has caused them to withdraw further.[5]

As a result, the association has been helping older people to move to new and safer locations where they do not have to be afraid to go out on the street or to leave their homes unoccupied. Charles Shaeffer, of the American Association of Retired Persons, told a Congressional subcommittee of one elderly woman who went blind because she was afraid to go to the hospital for a cataract operation because her home might be burglarized while she was gone. He said "the elderly are afraid to walk the streets," and this "makes them prisoners in their own homes." Furthermore, many elderly were afraid to report a crime for fear the criminals would take revenge.[6]

Because of their limited finances, many senior citizens are forced to live in public housing projects for low income people. A housing survey of 3,000 elderly tenants living in public housing projects in the Philadelphia area revealed that only about one out of four elderly tenants felt safe in their neighborhoods after dark. However, elderly tenants felt much more secure when they lived in housing for the elderly than when they lived in housing that included all age groups. The director of the survey believed that there were "many advantages in having young and old together." But because old people were being victimized by young criminals, he was forced to conclude that segregated housing for the elderly was necessary.[7]

Paradoxically, recent studies of criminal victimization show that it is not the old, but the young, who are most frequently victimized. Teenagers have the highest rates of victimization, and many question whether crime against the elderly is as serious a problem as has been suggested in the media and in testimony before legislative bodies which have been called upon to act. However, if victimization rates of the elderly are lower it is largely due to the preventive measures taken by older citizens, especially in high crime areas. If people lock themselves in their rooms, they are not likely to become victims of street crime.

A study done in Kansas City by the Midwest Research Institute concluded that:

> Many older Americans are afraid to use public streets for exercise and enjoyment, to go shopping for food or other necessities, or to use public transportation. There

have been some tragic reports of elderly persons sleeping in the daytime because they were so concerned about being victimized that they were afraid to sleep at night.[8]

Many programs have been set up to help prevent victimization of the elderly. These include direct mailing of Social Security checks to the recipient's bank for deposit, "Neighborhood Watch" programs operated by private citizens, and various transportation and escort services. More than twenty states have set up reimbursement programs for the victims of crime, and many of these favor older persons. Some state legislatures have even mandated special penalties for crimes against the elderly.

One unique approach to dealing with the problem of street crimes against the elderly has been working successfully in New York City, teenagers as escorts for the elderly. This is a particularly imaginative approach since most crimes against the elderly are committed by young people.

At Taft High School in the Bronx, nearly one hundred students volunteer from two to ten hours a week in an escort service for elderly people. The students help the neighborhood aged to shop and take them for walks or just sit and talk.

"Before we first met them, we were afraid they wouldn't accept us," said Anna Brown, a senior at Taft. "But when we met them and walked around their tables at the center when they were eating lunch, they kissed and hugged us. One woman squeezed my face and said, 'Look at me--I'm crying, I'm crying.'"

Miss Brown said several others in the program said that one reason they joined was to show the elderly that not all young people were criminals. And Michael Mirakian, coordinator of student affairs at Taft, said that while there was initially suspicion on both sides, primarily because most of the elderly are white and most of the students are Black and Hispanic, the program was very popular in three centers for the elderly near the school and would soon be extended to others.

At Lehman High School, also in the Bronx, twenty-three juniors and seniors are enrolled in a course in gerontology, which includes lectures on the psychology and biology of aging, and on widowhood and retirement. There are also debates and role playing. Each student also spends five hours a week working in either a nursing home or a center for the elderly.

Esta Metzger, who teaches the course, said: "The students have reacted very positively to the whole experience. A lot of times we discuss how depressed they feel for old people, but they also feel very good about the way the elderly look forward to seeing them."

Those who have been associated with similar programs see an interaction between the young and the old as the fastest--and perhaps the only--way of overcoming misconceptions and prejudice. Otherwise, they say, the young will continue to associate the old with sickness and death and the old will always see the young as wild and violent.

The chairman of the city's Youth Board, Jerome M. Becker, said of such programs: "It's a nice idea and I certainly encourage it, but I'm also realistic about it." Mr. Becker, whose department has been seeking ways of curbing youthful violence against the elderly, added: "As long as society views old people as burned out and as discards, why should kids have any respect for them? I strongly believe that adults must first change their attitudes towards the elderly."

Nonetheless, the number of such programs continues to increase. In addition to those in schools and nursing homes, the 113th Police Precinct in Jamaica, Queens, now has about 250 youthful volunteers in its escort service and a number of organizations throughout the city operate neighborhood shopping and escort services.

And both the young and the old have shared the benefits.

Millie Perez, fifteen, shops and runs errands for an hour or two after school several days a week for the elderly who live in the Stanley Isaacs housing complex at 91st Street and First Avenue.

"They always say old people are cranky, but I've learned that lots of times they have good reasons for being that way," she said. "They're people too and you learn a lot from them. They have as much to offer us as we have to offer them."[9]

Street crime and burglaries are by no means the only kinds of crime the elderly have to watch out for. A variety of con games are particularly aimed at the elderly involving such areas as insurance, pre-paid funerals, real estate and investment schemes. Approximately 90 per cent of the swindles carried out in California involve elderly victims, with an average of $2000 lost in each instance.[10]

NURSING HOMES

The mobility and lack of stability of the American family today make it virtually impossible for the family to assume responsibility for older people who are physically unable to care for themselves. For families who do decide to take responsibility for an aged parent in poor health, an advertisement by the American Nursing Home Association offers this "sensible solution":

> In many cases today, a nursing home is the sensible solution to the problem of care for the elderly and the chronically ill.
>
> Accepting the sensible solution does not mean that you are insensitive to the needs of the ill or elderly. It means you care....that you understand the requirements for a safe environment, regular medication as prescribed by a physician, a well-balanced regular diet, and the professional care of doctors, nurses, aides and therapists.
>
> The sensible solution is a nursing home where interest and needs are given special attention.
>
> To learn more about the sensible solution, use the attached coupon to send for your free copy of "Thinking About A Nursing Home."[11]

For the elderly person who is chronically ill, and for their offspring who may be unwilling or unable to care for them at home, a good nursing home is often the sensible solution. Of the 23,000 nursing homes in the United States, a great many fit the description in the advertisement and provide the kind of care that would be difficult or impossible to provide at home.

Since government programs of Medicaid and Medicare have begun paying a substantial part of the cost of nursing home care, nursing homes have grown into an $8 billion industry. About 1 million persons reside in such institutions, and 95 per cent of these are over sixty-five. Most of these residents who average eighty-two years of age, have no one else to care for them. Ninety per cent are unmarried, widowed, or divorced.

Federal and state governments have imposed strict regulations on nursing homes. Having regulations is one thing, but enforcing them is another. Recent scandals have uncovered situations in which residents have been beaten, over-medicated or tied to their beds when they complained about poor treatment. In many cases, untrained and poorly paid staff have been given responsibility for administering medication and therapy. Some residents have had their money and personal effects stolen by

nursing home staff, while at the same time the nursing home administrators were cheating the government by charging for medicine and services they had never provided. To expose some of the widespread problems, *U.S. News & World Report* reported the following situations:

> In Los Angeles, city and county officials are investigating nursing home conditions after a county health agency reported that six patients had died in the past fifteen months "at the hands of another, other than by accident."
>
> In Miami, Dade County authorities have been checking into the forty profit-making nursing homes in the area, two of which have been cited for more than 200 violations of regulations.
>
> In Portland, Oregon, the county board of commissioners closed a home with 220 patients because it didn't meet state fire code standards.
>
> In Massachusetts, state authorities acted to cut off medical payments, effective on March 17, to three nursing homes in Salem accused of patient neglect, poor administration and unsanitary conditions.
>
> In Indianapolis, a nursing home operator has been charged with assault in connection with the beating of a 76-year-old patient who wandered away.[12]

Unfortunately, reports of widespread abuses in nursing homes have given the industry a bad name. It is important to recognize that many nursing homes are staffed by concerned professionals who provide good care and treat residents with dignity and respect. While some homes are little more than shelters for people who have no one to care for them, others provide pleasant surroundings and a wide range of therapeutic and social activities. Obviously, great care should be exercised in choosing a nursing home.

Today less than five per cent of Americans over sixty-five reside in nursing homes, but it has been estimated that one out of four elderly people will spend some time in a nursing home before they die. Experts agree that a large percentage of nursing home residents would not need to be there if home care of one kind or another were provided. For some, periodic visits by a nurse to administer injections or medications might be necessary. For others, someone might have to come in to clean house and prepare meals. But since few agencies are prepared to offer these services, or because Medicare and Medicaid will not pay for them, the individual who could be at home ends up in a nursing home bed.

One alternative to nursing homes developing recently in many parts of the country is the "home care corporation." These organizations, funded partly by the communities they serve and partly by federal funds, are dedicated to making it possible for elderly people with needs to remain in their own homes. Among the services the corporations provide are food shopping, transportation, meal preparation and delivery of meals. With the provision of such services, many older Americans find it possible to remain in their homes and maintain contact with friends and relatives within their own community.

FIXED INCOMES AND INFLATION

The most common economic problem faced by older people is inflation, especially for those who rely on a fixed income, such as a pension or Social Security. During the 1960s and 1970s, Americans became accustomed to high rates of inflation. Table II shows the declining purchasing power of the dollar, in five year intervals, compared to the dollar in 1967, and Table III shows the rising consumer price index for basic categories of personal spending, also based on 1967 prices. Since 1976, as we are all aware, inflation has increased at an even higher rate.

TABLE II. PURCHASING POWER OF THE DOLLAR
(As compared to a 1967 dollar)

1940	$2.38	1965	$1.06
1945	1.85	1970	.86
1950	1.39	1975	.62
1955	1.25	1979	.47
1960	1.13		

Source: *Statistical Abstract, 1979*, p. 474.

TABLE III. RELATIVE COSTS OF BASIC PURCHASES, 1960-1979
(based on 1967 dollar)

	1965	1970	1975	1979
Home purchase	.97	1.18	1.60	2.18
Rent	.97	1.10	1.37	1.74
Fuel and utilities	.98	1.08	1.68	2.32
Clothing	.94	1.16	1.42	1.66
Transportation	.96	1.13	1.51	2.08
Medical care	.90	1.13	1.69	2.36
Entertainment	.96	1.17	1.52	1.88
Food	.94	1.15	1.75	2.34

SOURCE: Based on *Statistical Abstract, 1979*, p.484.

However, as the prices of goods and services climbed higher, wages and salaries were also climbing. Although people groaned about the constant rise in prices, rising income often offset it, and many with rapidly rising incomes actually found themselves better off. This, of course, was not true for two important categories of people--the unemployed and those living on fixed incomes. Millions of older Americans fall into one or both of these categories. During 1975, an estimated 4.75 million elderly people had an income of less than $2000, or less than $39 per week.

Being over sixty-five does not necessarily mean being poor. In 1977, there were 16.5 million people over sixty-five who had incomes between $15,000 and $25,000. (Source: *Statistical Abstract, 1979*, p. 460.) Payments under some government pensions and under Social Security, the main source of income for millions of older Americans, are now periodically increased to make up for the rising cost of living. But even the maximum payment under Social Security is not sufficient by itself to provide a decent standard of living. The following cartoon makes this point.

Her cupboard was bare? But doesn't Mother Hubbard get a social security check?

Source: Paull and Bülbül, *Everybody's Studying Us, The Ironies of Aging in the Pepsi Generation,* p. 56. Reprinted with permission of the artist.

Social Security recipients between ages sixty-two and sixty-four earning over $4080 or sixty-five and older earning over $5500 per year automatically suffer a reduction in benefits. Many elderly people who are able and willing to work are thus discouraged from seeking a job.

Most private pension plans make no provision for inflation, and the average retiree receives only about one third of the maximum income received while working. This is all right for the retiree who has been able to accumulate considerable assets, but those who rely on savings now find that their money is worth considerably less than it was when they "put something away for a rainy day." Joe E. Hardy, an eighty-year-old retired businessman, wrote to the White House to protest about the effect of inflation on his savings:

> When I was a boy, we lived seven miles north of Pilot Point, Texas, on a farm. It was a great event in my life when I got to go to town with my father, riding the old farm wagon....
>
> As we passed the county poor farm, we could see the old people sitting on the lawn in front of the house. My father would whisper, "Those people, when they were young, did not save anything for their old age."

> I was determined not to sit in front of the county poor farm when I became old. However, the money that I placed in life insurance in the 1920s and 1930s is now worth only 20 cents on the dollar compared to what the dollar was worth when I sent them ahead to be waiting for me in old age.[13]

Most desperate of all are those millions of elderly people who have no savings and do not receive a pension, Social Security or any other form of income. For these people, unless supported by charitable friends and relatives, the only alternative is to accept public assistance or "welfare." Many elderly people, accustomed to earning their keep, are too proud to accept welfare. They consider it shameful, humiliating, or just downright wrong. One study showed that of 500,000 elderly people in New York City who qualified for public assistance, only ten per cent applied. Economic problems are thought to be one major factor causing the elderly suicide rate to be much higher than that of any other age group. People over sixty-five make up 11 per cent of the nation's population, but they account for at least 25 per cent of the nation's suicides.

A variety of public programs have been established to provide some relief to older Americans with limited means. Subsidized meals and food stamps are available to those on low incomes. But many find it difficult to save enough out of their meager budgets to pay their portion of the cost of subsidized meals or to buy enough food stamps to get through the month. The aged are more prone to illness and hospitalization, and one of the highest rates of inflation has been in medical costs which have risen astronomically over the past several years, as shown in Table IV.

TABLE IV. INDEX OF MEDICAL COSTS
(based on 1967=100)

DATE	FOR ALL MEDICAL CARE	DRUGS AND PRESCRIPTIONS	PHYSICIAN'S FEES	SEMI-PRIVATE HOSPITAL RM.
1960	79.1	104.5	77.0	57.3
1965	89.5	100.2	88.3	75.9
1970	120.6	103.6	121.4	145.4
1975	168.6	118.8	169.4	236.1
1979(May)	236.3	152.4	240.7	363.9

SOURCE: Selected from *Statistical Abstract, 1979*, p. 103.

Medicare, a government program of health insurance, now provides some assistance, but, on the average, Medicare still pays less than half the total medical costs of the elderly. The poorest can also qualify for Medicaid, a form of public assistance which requires a "means test" to prove that the recipient is actually poor, which many elderly view as humiliating.

The *U.S. News & World Report* description of San Francisco could apply to any large American city.

> For more and more of America's 21.8 million persons who are aged sixty-five and over, the current runaway inflation is turning life on a fixed income into a deepening nightmare.
>
> In slum areas of big cities, elderly men and women who can no longer afford rentals elsewhere are congregating in "gray ghettos." Often, they are pinned to their shoddy hotel rooms by fear of thieves or muggers roaming the streets outside.
>
> More affluent retirees are giving up small luxuries and cutting back on food and clothing purchases as they eye a newly uncertain future.
>
> Here in San Francisco, which many Americans see as Dream City, an eighty-two-year-old retired police officer watches his life savings drain away as he awaits an increase in his meager pension.
>
> In one blue-collar neighborhood, an elderly man who retired on what he thought was an ample pension has taken to going up and down the streets daily asking people if they want their lawns cut.
>
> In the "gray ghetto" north of Market Street, a seventy-two-year-old man who once dealt cards in Nevada casinos fears another rent increase for his hotel room. He canvasses nearby restaurants daily, hoping to save a few pennies on meals.
>
> "When the end of the month comes, I am usually down to my last few dollars. When that happens, I sometimes skip supper," he said.
>
> Hundreds, if not thousands, of San Francisco's elderly live on the brink of the abyss--skimping on meals and agonizing over prospects of higher costs of food stamps, rentals and Medicare.
>
> One frightened woman told an interviewer at a free medical clinic offering subsidized meals: "I haven't a penny for food. I can eat here tomorrow, but then what do I do until Tuesday?"

Said a spokesman: "Inflation is starving senior citizens--that's what it's done. Many times when they finish paying their rent they don't have the money for food stamps, even though they're entitled to them...."

At a clinic that serves older people in a rundown area of San Francisco--"The Tenderloin"--a social worker has this to say: "Some who come in at mealtime will leave without eating because they don't want to let people know they are without the 50 cents paid by those who can't afford it...."

Mrs. Jean Meller, seventy-four, who is separated from her husband in Rhode Island, came to San Francisco a year ago. For a time she lived on $81 a month from Social Security, getting by on one subsidized meal daily plus fruit.

"If I didn't have food stamps, I would never have been able to do it," she says. "I would have starved."

She now receives $255 a month--some in Social Security, but most in public assistance.

With that help, she is able to live in a shabby but spacious room in "The Tenderloin," amid its seedy hotels and cheap bars.

It is a section where more than 15,000 elderly poor live--for the most part in small rooms and without adequate medical care or attention. Some are getting only the minimum $81 a month, and a few complain that there has been no increase in their checks for the last ten years.

Like other older persons, Mrs. Meller worries about the high rate of crime, the prostitutes and drug pushers. Purse snatchings are common, especially when Social Security checks arrive and the elderly go out to cash them. Mrs. Meller says: "You can't protect yourself. Most older people stay off the streets after three o'clock."

Rising prices agitate her. She says: "You know there are people starving in the street . There are people eating out of the garbage cans. Do you believe that? Right out of the garbage can! Do you know how rough it is when you have to pay so much for a loaf of bread?"

In recent months, Mrs. Meller says, she has become involved with a group of senior citizens--the "North of Market Tenants Organization"--to demand better benefits and services from municipal, state and federal bureaucracies.

She explained: "A lot of the old men and women around here can fight for themselves. But the huge majority can't. They're too tired with life. I want to change that attitude. We may all be poor here, but we're going to fight back."[14]

"Fighting back" is exactly what many older Americans are doing. The economic interests and viewpoints of older Americans are as divergent as their economic situations, and the concept of a political/economic bloc of senior citizens is a myth. But there are a number of organizations representing broad segments of the older population, often with strong support from other age groups, which are making their voices heard in the places where political and economic decisions are made. Neither politicians nor private entrepreneurs can afford to overlook the concerns of so many millions of voters and consumers. The result is that older Americans are beginning to receive, and will continue to receive, help from both government and business with the varied economic problems which all too often accompany old age.

MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT THE ECONOMICS OF AGING

MYTH: To be "old" is to be "poor."

FACT: The majority of older Americans enjoy financial security and economic well-being. Many own their homes, have considerable assets in savings and investments and have a regular income from continued employment, pensions or Social Security. Senior citizens are eligible for certain tax breaks, subsidized services and discounts not available to the general public. At the same time, older people have often become free of the need to support a family and have more money to devote to their own wants and needs.

However, the statistical chances of being poor increase sharply with old age. Among the causes of poverty are unemployment, high medical expenses, ineligibility for a pension or Social Security, inadequate savings and inflation.

MYTH: The elderly poor are people who did not plan ahead for old age.

FACT: While this may be true in some instances, it more often is not. Some people never earned enough to save sufficiently for old age. Many worked at jobs which did not qualify them for either a pension or Social Security. Others who saved diligently throughout their working

lives have found their savings vastly depleted by rapidly rising inflation and high taxes. Those who need to and are physically able to work often find it impossible to find a job--frequently for no other reason than their age.

MYTH: Elderly parents are a burden to their offspring.

FACT: The vast majority of elderly parents receive no economic assistance from their offspring and support themselves from their own resources. Those unable to do so are more likely to receive economic assistance from a public or private agency than from their own families.

MYTH: The elderly could be part of the "mainstream" of society but prefer to be off by themselves.

FACT: Many older people do prefer to "be off by themselves" among their own generation. This is one reason for the popularity of retirement communities. However, according to a national poll of senior citizens, most would prefer to have contact with all generations. They are prevented from being part of the mainstream by housing patterns, fear of crime, lack of transportation and widespread avoidance of the elderly by the young.

ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

1. Present students with the following statistical information via blackboard, overhead projector or duplicated sheets. Ask them to present hypotheses on how each of these changes in the American economy might affect the situation of older people. Discuss these hypotheses with the class from the standpoint of your own background in this chapter or from other sources.

   a. The farm population of the United States dropped from more than 30 million in 1940 to approximately 9 million in 1975.

   b. In 1979, the purchasing power of the dollar was approximately one-fifth of what it was in 1940.

   c. Doctor's fees were approximately three times as high in 1979 as they were in 1960, while semi-private hospital rooms were almost eight times as high.

   d. Food costs were almost two and a half times as high in 1979 as they were in 1960.

e. At the time of the 1970 census, only 27 per cent of people over sixty-five had finished high school, as compared with 58 per cent of the population under sixty-five.

Note: You may prefer to provide students with copies of the graphs and charts appearing in this chapter, which deal with more complete statistics in visual form, instead of the quick summaries provided above.

2. One of the best ways for students to appreciate the situation of an older American trying to make ends meet on a fixed income is to carry out a budget activity. Information for this activity is <u>not</u> hypothetical. It was provided by an elderly widow living in Massachusetts in 1975, and the food prices were obtained from a supermarket in her community at that same time. (If you can provide your students with current information for someone in your own community, the activity would be even more relevant.) Students can experience her problems by doing the following exercise, either individually or in small groups.

a. Based on the information provided below, make up a monthly budget for this elderly widow living alone. Allocate a monthly amount for each item in your budget.

b. Your budget must meet all basic expenses, but you can adjust the amounts spent for food and "extras" as you see fit.

MRS. DONAHUE'S FINANCES

ASSETS:

Property valuation (owns her home)	$26,000
Savings	3,500

Note: Under Massachusetts law, she cannot qualify for welfare unless she owns no property and has savings less than $1,500.

INCOME:

Social Security	$ 109.80/month
City Pension	140.00/month

BASIC EXPENSES:

Water	$ 36.00/month
Heat	600.00/year
Electricity	32.00/month
Gas	6.00/month
Telephone	18.00/month
Charge Account	15.00/month
Medicare	13.00/month
Real estate tax	980.00/year
Life insurance	8.00/month
Clothing and shoes	50.00/year
Over-the-counter medication	220.00/year

EXTRAS:

Newspapers	12.00/month
Movies	2.00/admission
Lunch out	2.00/meal
Dinner out	3.50/meal

Note: She does not drive, and any trips to supermarket, restaurant or theater require taking a bus at forty cents fare or a cab at an average fare of $2.00.

FOOD PRICES:

margarine (½ lb./week)	$ .79/lb.
butter (½ lb./week	.89/lb.
milk (3 quarts/week)	.40/qt.
tea bags (100/month)	1.49/100
coffee (2 lbs./month)	1.30/lb.
flour (5 lbs./month)	1.09/5 lbs.
sugar (5 lbs./month)	1.89/5 lbs.
bread (2 loaves/week)	.55/loaf
steak	1.99/lb.
hamburg	1.09/lb.
pork chops	1.29/lb.
chicken breast	1.29/lb.
liver	.89/lb.
hot dogs	1.29/lb.
potatoes (5 lbs./month)	.59/5 lbs.
catsup (1 bottle/two months)	.45/bottle
pastries	.89/pkg.
cookies	.89/pkg.
eggs	.75/doz.
cereal	1.09/qt.
corn (4 cans/month)	.39/can
peas (4 cans/month)	.35/can
beans (4 cans/month)	.39/can
toilet tissue	.73/4 rolls
paper towels	.57/roll
facial tissues	.35/box
soap	.52/4 bars
tuna fish	.75/can
soda	.51/bottle
fruit juice	.45/qt.
jelly	.69/small jar
peanut butter	.65/small jar
detergent	1.35/small box
toothpaste	.69/tube
cake mix	.79/pkg.
crackers	.65/box
salt	.16/box
tomatoes	.60/lb.
lettuce	.49/head
onions	.69/2 lbs.
oranges	.14/ea.
apples	.98/½doz.

Note: Base your food budget on 21 meals per week plus snacks. This woman also likes to bake cakes, cookies or pies once per week and likes to have meat with every meal.

c. Assuming that the general rate of inflation for the following year was five per cent (or seven per cent, ten per cent, etc.), make out a new budget taking into account the rate of inflation with no increase in income. How will you meet the problem of inflation? What will you give up?

d. When all have completed the budget activity, or given up in frustration, discuss the following questions:

1. Do you consider this woman "well off," "poor," "destitute"? Why? (Note that she owns property, has savings and receives not only a pension but Social Security as well.)

2. What do you think your own priorities will be when you retire? Will you be able to do the things you want if your financial circumstances are similar to those of this woman?

Note: Students may be interested to know that the situation of this woman did change within one year of the time she provided the information. She sold her house and moved into a small apartment in the home of her son who is married and has two young children.

3. While older citizens, like anyone else, may be reluctant to talk about their own personal finances, they generally are quite willing to talk in "impersonal" terms about economic problems of the elderly. You could choose one or more brief cases, such as the case of Henry Schultz or the letter of Joe E. Hardy, included in this chapter. Have students and senior guests read and discuss the cases together. Senior citizens need not talk about their personal situations but should discuss the economic problems that are faced by people of their own generation.

USEFUL TERMS FOR STUDENTS TO KNOW

ASSETS: Property or things of value, such as savings, real estate and investments

EXPENDITURE: Money paid out or spent

INFLATION: Rising costs

MEDICAID: A government program of medical assistance for those who cannot afford to pay their own medical expenses

PENSION: A retirement income paid by an employer to a former employee after years of service

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE: Financial assistance to people with limited incomes, commonly referred to as "welfare"

REVENUE: Money received by government, especially from taxes

SOCIAL SECURITY: A government insurance program financed by employer-employee payroll taxes (or "contributions"), most of which is used to provide retirement income

SUBSIDIZING: Paying part of the cost of some good or service in order to make it more affordable to those who might otherwise have to go without

RECOMMENDED READINGS

BOOKS

Atchley, Robert C. *Social Forces.* (See Chapter 7.)

Butler, Robert N. *Why Survive?* (See Chapters 1 and 2.)

_____, *Almost 65: Baseline Data From the Retirement History Study*, Washington, D.C.: Social Security Administration, 1976.

_____, *The Economics of Aging: Toward 2001*, Ann Arbor, MI: Institute of Gerontology, University of Michigan - Wayne State University, 1976.

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Flint, Jerry. "The Old Folks," *Forbes*, February 18, 1980, pp. 51-56.

Malinchak, Alan A. and Douglas Wright. "Older Americans and Crime: The Scope of Elderly Victimization," *Aging*, March/April 1978, pp. 12-16.

Pascor, Elizabeth Jean. "New Alternatives to Old-Age Homes," *McCall's*, July 1976, p. 49.

Pepper, Claude. "Will There Be A Brighter Tomorrow for the Nation's Elderly?" *USA Today*, May 1980, pp. 14-16.

Tavani, Cleonice. "Meeting the Needs of the Oldest of the Old," *Aging*, January/February 1979, pp. 2-7.

_____, "Nursing Homes -- Easing Human Misery," *AFL-CIO American Federationist*, March 1977, pp. 1-4.

_____, "Will The Social Security Bubble Burst?" (adapted from *Nations Business* by Robert T. Gray), *The Readers Digest*, May 1975, pp. 147-151.

FIVE. WORK AND RETIREMENT

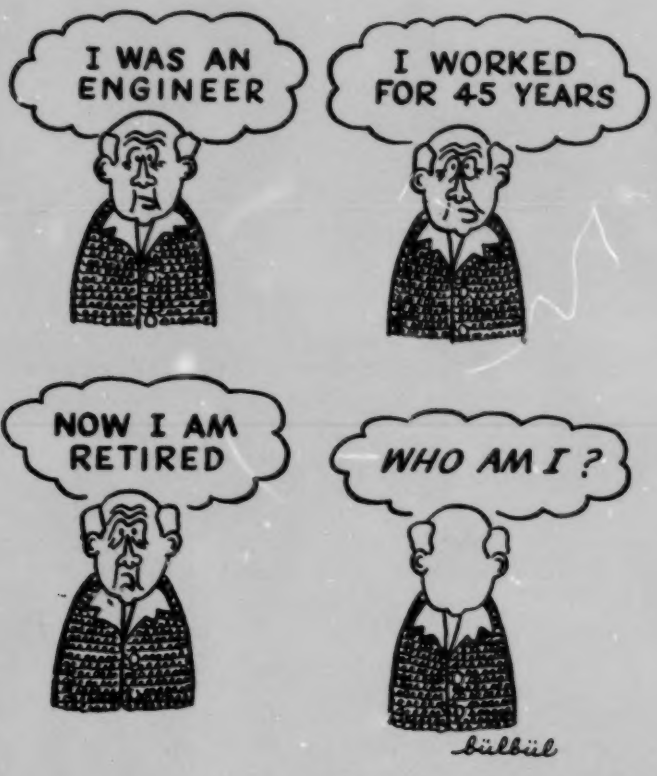
"Everyone is too old for something, but no one is too old for everything." --Anonymous

When two adult Americans are getting acquainted, one of the first questions one is likely to ask the other is: "What do you do?" Besides identifying ourselves by name and the place where we live, we also identify ourselves by occupation ("I'm an engineer. I work for General Motors.") Work has always been highly valued in our society, and one of the highest compliments is to call someone a "hard worker." We have even set aside a national holiday, Labor Day, to honor the laborers whose work built our country.

Work is not just what we do between certain hours to earn money to buy the things we want and need. Work is a total experience that affects all aspects of our lives. It often determines our place of residence, standard of living, daily schedule of activity, interests and choice of friends. It is not surprising, then, that retirement can be one of the most difficult adjustments an older person has to make.

Retirement means taking on a whole new pattern of life. It means that a person has lost an important role or status -- an important part of the person's identity. Saying "I'm a retired nurse" is very different from saying "I'm a nurse." It means that one is identified not by what the person does, but what the person used to do. Retirement can mean the loss of friends and associates with whom one daily shared many experiences on the job. It can mean the end of a sense of being useful, of being needed, and therefore of being important.

Retirement does present the challenge of finding interesting and personally satisfying ways to fill up the hours that used to be spent on the job. The person who has always had a wide range of interests and lacked time to pursue them may make the transition more easily than the person who has always gone around after work trying to find something to do. But for both types of people, retirement will be a major adjustment.



Source: Paull and Bülbül, *Everybody's Studying Us*, p. 11. Reprinted with permission of the artist.

People who dislike their work look forward eagerly to the day when they can leave it all behind and enjoy a well-earned rest. The idea of not having to set the alarm, not having to fight commuter traffic, not punching a time clock, and not being told what to do all day will seem like heaven to a person who has always thought of working life as a "rat race." But those who enjoy their work and feel that it is important will often postpone retirement as long as possible.

Retirement was not always the typical expectation of older Americans. Around 1900, when life expectancy averaged only forty-seven years, relatively few people had jobs that provided a pension plan. There was no Social Security program until the 1930s, and the first Social Security benefit check was not received by a retired worker until 1940. Even those who lived to what is now considered an appropriate retirement age usually could not afford to retire. The typical pattern for most workers was to work all their lives, unless illness prevented them from doing so.

Today the situation is considerably different. Most workers expect and look forward to a period of "taking it easy" in their

later years. One study shows that one-third of retired men in the United States retired voluntarily. Another third retired "voluntarily," but for reasons of health. Less than one-fifth of those studied were forced to retire simply because of their age.[1] The fact that people look forward to retirement and do so voluntarily, however, does not necessarily mean that they find the transition easy or even that they enjoy being retired. As one retiree put it,

> Most people look forward to it and think it's going to be nothing but fishing and hunting and this stuff and that. But three months of that, fishing poles, and you throw them away, and you're not interested in that anymore. A man has to work, he has to feel as though he's doing something.[2]

REACTIONS TO RETIREMENT

It is risky to make general statements about what retirement is like. Circumstances vary considerably from one person to another. Retirement can be the saddest or happiest time, a time of dismay or a time of hope. Older people who enjoy health and economic security become free to do all the things that were impossible when they had the responsibilities of earning a living or caring for a family. For them, retirement represents freedom, a time of opportunity and creative fulfillment. Others who are not so well-situated may lose friends, independence, and their significant role in life. The following statements by retirees reflect the variety of meanings that retirement can have.

> *You can't do anything you want to do much. Nobody fools with you much then. You don't have enough money to get what you need, not to mention what you want.* A sixty-nine-year-old Black retired farmer from South Carolina

> *You have, as a rule, more freedom to do what you wish. You are not tied down to a job. You have more freedom for leisure, to travel if you so choose. In a general category, you have more medical care provided for certain people.* A retired farmer in California

> *You don't have to worry so much. Your children are raised so you don't have to worry about their food and clothing. Your wants are small. You don't care to go out much, and you don't eat much or buy many new clothes. These things aren't important anymore. You don't go where people see you, so you don't need new clothes.* An eighty-eight-year-old retired service worker in Minnesota

> *The younger generation just doesn't care about the older generation. They have no respect and won't look after the older folks like it was when I was young.* A seventy-three-year-old retired laborer from Georgia

I'm too old and too sick, and I don't have enough to live on...I haven't bought a new suit in twenty years. I don't have enough to live. An eighty-six-year-old Black retired farmer in Mississippi

Mostly, it's the help we get from the government. We have always looked after ourselves. I worked after my husband died at sixty-six until I had to quit work. The government is handling it better, so I can help my daughter with the rent. A seventy-eight-year-old retired practical nurse in California

The best thing about being over sixty-five is getting closer with my husband again. The children are grown up and I have more time to spend with my husband. A sixty-six-year-old housewife in New York

The only thing with me was that I couldn't continue working. When I was sixty-five, I could do as much work as I could at thirty-five, but no one wanted me. A seventy-three-year-old retired craftsman from California [3]

AVOIDING THE RETIREMENT TRAP

How do people who have worked all their lives fill up that big chunk of time that is left when their working careers are over? Some do it by watching more television, completing more crossword puzzles, reading, or just sitting around the house. Others take up hobbies such as woodworking, gardening or arts and crafts. Those who can afford it may travel, either to visit old friends and relatives or just to see the world.

Frequently, for the first time in their lives, retirees will develop a regular physical fitness routine which may include calisthenics, hiking, bicycling, jogging, or swimming. It is not at all uncommon to find people whose physical condition improves drastically after retirement simply because they now have time for physical fitness.

One way to avoid the "retirement trap" is to engage in a new activity that provides a new role or purpose in life, such as going back to school. In recent years, institutions of higher learning are finding senior citizens in the registration lines. In increasing numbers, older people are entering programs to prepare themselves for second careers or for the pure pleasure of learning. The University of Wisconsin-Whitewater is one of several universities which have established special programs to help the elders get back into the classroom. The university's "Live In and Learn Program" provides dormitory rooms and meals at modest rates for senior citizens who wish to either audit courses free or take them for credit for fees. Among those who have taken advantage of the program are Mrs. Zelda

Stanke, age seventy, and her mother, Mrs. Mollie Fritz, age ninety-three.

Case 7. Zelda Stanke

Mrs. Stanke, a widow, enrolled in the program in the fall of 1974. She enjoyed it so much, she convinced her mother to enroll with her last year. The two women live in adjoining rooms in Wells Hall. "We have a code system of knocks on the wall to signal if Mother needs anything," says Mrs. Stanke.

She recalled that when she and her husband, a former Methodist pastor, were nearing age seventy, "We agreed that something could happen to either one, so we decided the one who was left should find something interesting and challenging."

"After his death, I heard about this program. I got myself over here to the orientation and felt it was just the thing. I find the students a delight. They are very friendly and warm and understanding."

Mrs. Stanke adds, "We haven't felt any students have resented us, although we haven't tried to boss things. I think in general students have accepted us very well. They have told us our contribution far outweighs anything else."

While she and her mother have gotten along well with other students, she concedes, "Their way of life is different. But maybe they're pioneering new ways, too."

Mrs. Stanke believes the elderly "must just accept the challenge and get out and do something different. A goal like that keeps us looking forward and not in the past. The young, middle-aged and senior citizens have a right to go out after things beautiful. It gives zest and sparkle to living."

During her first semester, Mrs. Stanke took courses in psychology, ecology and man, art metal and jewelry and estates and trusts. Last fall she took additional courses in psychology and retirement and ...in social issues.

Mrs. Fritz has taken a course on the psychology of retirement and an English course that included poetry and play reading. She has written poetry all of her life and took the course to have some of her poems evaluated. When she brought them to class for her instructor to critique, he said, "Mrs. Fritz, you're improving with age." She hopes eventually to be able to compile a booklet of her poetry.[4]

CONTINUING A CAREER

Of course, another way to avoid the pitfalls of retirement is simply not to retire. Continuing to follow a lifetime career is not an option open to most people, but it is open to those who are self-employed in a needed skill or profession. This is particularly true if the person maintains good health and if the skill or craft is in great demand. Such is the case of Dr. Mary Fulstone, who, after fifty-nine years of service as a country doctor, still gives no thought to retirement.

Case 8. Mary A. Fulstone

Dr. Mary Fulstone has delivered between 4,500 and 5,000 babies. In fact, nearly everyone born in Nevada's Smith Valley and the surrounding countryside has been delivered by her. Many of them were home-delivered babies before the new health center was built in 1955. Before that, the only hospital in the area was a former bordello.

When Mary Fulstone received her medical degree from the University of California at Berkeley in 1918, she returned to the then remote northwestern Nevada area where she had been born. She understood the needs of the ranchers and miners there.

"When I came here in 1919 fresh out of medical school, and a new bride, I expected some resentment because I was a woman, but it didn't happen and, as it turned out, I was welcomed with open arms. I was the only doctor in the valley," she says.

Her first patients were members of the Piute Indian tribe. She delivered their babies while the fathers tended charcoal fires to keep the wickiups [huts] warm against the winter storms.

"Dr. Mary," as everyone in the valley calls her, is eighty-four and she says, "I've given no thought to retiring. My patients are my family and I would not want to desert them."

She is concerned that there are not more general practitioners following in her footsteps. "Some of these young doctors want to be nine-to-fivers with Wednesday afternoons and weekends off for skiing," she says. "Unfortunately, a country doctor can't plan life that way, as illness, injuries and deliveries occur at all hours of the day and night and you have to be available." She can't remember her last real vacation. "Every time I start to go away, the phone rings and a new baby is about to be born."

Now, her day begins with seeing patients in her office in her over-a-century-old ranch house, from about 8:00 AM until about 11:00 AM, and then she is driven by her Piute Indian cook-driver, Eleanor Pete, to the Lyon County Health Center in Yerington, which is twenty-five miles away. The center is small, but very well-equipped. There she makes rounds, sees new patients, assists in operations, and then sees more patients in her Yerington office. There are also the night-time emergencies. Her Thursday off is often spent working.

Dr. Mary has five children of her own, eleven grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. She delivered all but her own. She makes house calls on kin, if needed. "It's a chance to visit with my children and their children," she says.

Her children are also very active in the valley. They are ranchers and farmers and ski-resort operators. Her husband's and her ranch has now grown to 15,000 acres, with 1,500 head of cattle and 10,000 sheep. Her husband, Fred, eighty-eight, operates this with the help of their son, Freddie.

At eighty-four, she is working on her fourth generation of patients, and has practiced medicine longer than any other doctor in Nevada. She was Nevada's "Mother of the Year" in 1950 and "Doctor of the Year" in 1961.

The telephone rings all hours of the day and night, her husband says, "and she answers it regardless of the time or problem, big or small." The local telephone company presented her with a gold-painted telephone, commemorating her "fifty years of being available."

There is a plaque at the entrance of the Yerington Health Center. It reads: "Dedicated to our Dr. Mary Fulstone, whose medical skill and helping hand have protected and guided us through many years; a faithful wife, loving mother, and philanthropist to all mankind." Her "babies," 5,000 strong, might put it more simply. "Dr. Mary cares."[5]

People sometimes think of retirement as a clear-cut choice between working and not working. However, one does not have to make a choice between maintaining a full-time active career, as Dr. Mary has done, and giving up work entirely. Many older people find it beneficial to take on a part-time job, which not only helps financially but also provides a way of slowing down while still remaining active and maintaining a significant role. There are many part-time jobs open to retirees, and they can make a considerable difference for the retiree who needs or wants to work. (See the case of Clifford Harran in Chapter One, page 8.)

THE UNEMPLOYMENT PROBLEM

Older people frequently feel a need to be busy at some worthwhile activity that has value for themselves and for others. There are also many who, beyond any psychological need to work, simply need to supplement a meager income in order to live comfortably. However, a number of obstacles stand in the way of fully utilizing the potential resource that older Americans represent. These include favoritism of employers toward younger workers, lack of education or skills for jobs available, health problems, reduction of Social Security benefits if a certain amount is earned, and lack of protection by present laws against age discrimination for those over seventy.

Presently about 12 per cent (2.5 million) of people over sixty-five are working for pay. Approximately one-fourth of these people work full-time, and about three-fourths work part-time. But when retired or unemployed older Americans were asked in a poll whether they would like to work, thirty-one per cent said they would.[6] Why is it that some six million older people who want to work are not working? They gave the following reasons:

TABLE V

WHY OLDER AMERICANS FEEL THEY CANNOT WORK

REASON	% OF RESPONDENTS
Poor health	57
Too old	28
No work available, lack of job opportunities	15
Other interests (as housework, travel, gardening)	8
Would lose benefits (as Social Security, pension) or pay too much in taxes if working	4
Lack of transportation	2
Other	10

These responses tell a good deal about the way older people perceive their situation, but they do not tell the whole story.

During the nineteenth century, most people worked at manual labor and received the necessary training for their jobs in their own families and communities. This was especially true in farm

families. After years of working alongside his father, a boy was well-trained in all the skills of operating a farm. Daughters learned from their mothers the domestic duties of maintaining a household. When a son or daughter left the farm to work in a business or factory, it was usually nearby. Most needed skills could be learned just by working on the job. Formal education was not considered very important, and even in the early twentieth century only a minority of youth had the opportunity to complete high school.

In the twentieth century, the importance of formal schooling has grown for several reasons. Not only has the number of family farms declined, but the need for child labor on the farm has been reduced as machines do more and more of the work. As industries grew, labor unions and other groups pressed government to pass laws restricting child labor and requiring children to attend school. Thus young people have more time for school and are required to go to school for longer periods of time.

Many young people today might wish they lived in the "good old days," before English, math, history and science were considered essential, when "homework" meant feeding the chickens or bringing in a load of firewood. But the fact remains that formal education is essential for living and working in today's complex society. While there are growing numbers of people who are now overeducated for their jobs, there is still a direct correlation between the amount of education people have and how much they earn.

In this respect, today's older people find themselves at a great disadvantage. Raised in an age when education was far less important, most elderly people who need to work find themselves unable to compete with younger and better educated job seekers. Often the skills with which older Americans earned their living are no longer in demand. Changes in the markets for goods and services and the development of automation have wiped out their opportunities for employment. Similarly, older Americans may find it difficult to gain admission to training programs that would provide them with new job skills.

Another problem for older people who want to work is illness. Eighty-six per cent of elderly people have chronic health problems of one kind or another. Most of these illnesses, however, are treatable and do not prevent the person from working or living a normal life. Even when health is not a real problem, many employers still favor younger workers simply because they expect older people to be slower, harder to train, and more likely to be absent due to illness.

In seeking jobs, the problem of ageism (discrimination on the basis of age) is greatly magnified when the person is also a member of a racial or ethnic group which suffers from discrimination. Studies done in 1971 indicated that elderly Blacks are more than twice as likely to be poor as elderly whites. Almost one-third of

elderly Blacks were then living on yearly incomes of less than $1000, or less than twenty dollars per week. Almost eight out of ten elderly Black women were considered to be poor or "near poor" based on what most authorities consider to be the very low poverty levels established by the United States government. Inability to read, write or speak English adds another dimension to the problem for some minority groups. The average life expectancy of Mexican-Americans is only fifty-seven, but of those who are sixty-five, well over half would be considered "functionally illiterate" in the English language. One writer summed it up in these words:

> To be old is one kind of problem. To be old and sickly is another. And to be old and ill and non-white is still a third. Add to those three the additional burden of being unable to speak English, and you find that becoming old is simply one more load piled onto the back of a person trying to make his way through the difficult field of life.[7]

Employment for older women is particularly hard to find, especially for women who have not been working outside the home. Now it is common for women to have their own careers or to work outside the home to supplement family income. In "grandmother's" day, the typical attitude of society was that women belonged in the kitchen. Most women, after marrying and beginning to raise a family, depended primarily on their husbands to "bring home the bacon." Since women on the average marry three years younger than men and live about seven years longer, millions of elderly widows now find themselves facing years of living alone with no regular means of support and inadequate skills to make a decent living. A woman does not have to reach her sixty-fifth birthday to find out what ageism means in the job market, as illustrated in the case of Dorothy Hill.

Case 9. The Discarding of Mrs. Hill

Dorothy Hill's husband died of stomach cancer last February. Mrs. Hill was fifty-three. Her two daughters flew in for the funeral and spent a few days in the Hill house, to keep their mother company. Then they went home. And Mrs. Hill, who had been a housewife for thirty-one years, began trying to cope for herself.

What follows is not about personal loss. It is more basic than that. It is about survival. What happened to Dorothy Hill could have happened anywhere in this country; the details would vary from state to state, but the story would end the same way.

One morning, shortly after the funeral, Mrs. Hill sat down at her husband's big steel desk to think about money. The private insurance was gone after three months of medical bills. The savings account was close to empty; the mortgage

payment alone would finish it off within a few months. And there was no widow's pension: Mr. Hill had died before retirement, which, according to his company's plan, did not entitle her to any money.

Mrs. Hill made a list. She always made lists when she felt panicky. On one side of the paper she wrote "OUT," and underneath that, "HOUSE. UTILITIES. TAXES. FOOD." On the other side she wrote, "IN," and under that, "SOCIAL SECURITY. PART-TIME WORK?"

She paused. They had talked about this before he died, but only briefly; he had been so sick. She had not been able to be practical. She had not been able to think.

Mrs. Hill called the Social Security Office. Her voice was apologetic. "I realize I'll have to come down there and fill out some forms and so on," she said to the woman who answered. "I just wondered approximately how much I'm entitled to."

"How old are you?" the woman asked.

"Fifty-three," said Mrs. Hill.

"Minor children?"

"No."

"Are you disabled?"

"Not that I know of," Mrs. Hill said.

"Your monthly benefit will depend on your husband's average earnings, of course," said the Social Security woman. "But you will not begin receiving the benefit until your sixtieth birthday."

Mrs. Hill was silent for a moment. She transferred the receiver from her right ear to her left and waited until her voice was steady. "I'm sorry," she said. "Would you say that again, please? I don't think I understand."

"Widows without minor children are eligible for Social Security at age sixty," the woman said.

"*Sixty*," Mrs. Hill repeated, almost whispering.

"Disabled widows may collect at fifty," the woman said. She spoke patiently, with the stiffness and impersonality of a government pamphlet. "Widows caring for minor children may collect at any age. But in your case the eligibility age would appear to be sixty."

"What about that special new thing?" Mrs. Hill asked. "What do they call it? The supplemental program?"

"SSI," the woman said. "Supplemental Security Income. That's available to those who are blind, disabled or over sixty-five.

"What about housewives?" Mrs. Hill asked, her voice rising. "What about women who were completely dependent on their husbands for support? Isn't there any coverage in the meantime? Is this just a hole they get dropped into?"

"The period before sixty is...," the woman hesitated, "ore of noncoverage."

"I'm sorry," said the Social Security woman.

Mrs. Hill hung up.

Two weeks later she began looking for a job. She made an appointment with an employment agency, one of the few that did not list openings for *Brite Gal, Attractive* in its newspaper classifieds. The employment counselor, a smiling young woman, met Mrs. Hill at the front desk. "We'll just do a preliminary interview this time, Dot," she said, smiling. Mrs. Hill winced; only her closest friends called her Dot. "Let's go over your work history and goals."

"I'm a housewife," she said. "I did some typing a long time ago, but my husband and I agreed that I would quit when we married. My work history is as a housewife."

The young woman's smile disappeared. "No recent outside work at *all?*"

Mrs. Hill tried to improvise. "I was very active in the Red Cross. I helped organize free public lectures."

"I mean paid work," the young woman said.

"No," said Mrs. Hill.

The young woman sighed. "Dot, we're going to have some problems placing you. Our employers almost always want recent work experience." She opened a large black book and began leafing through pages of job descriptions. "We do run into this from time to time--the woman returning to the work force --and it's a real problem. There's the factor of health--"

"My health is fine," Mrs. Hill said, more sharply than she had intended.

"I'm sure it is," the young woman smiled again. "But the nature of secretarial work has also changed quite a bit since you got your experience. The demands are different. Technological changes and so forth."

"I'm perfectly willing to learn," Mrs. Hill said. "I have a good memory. I learn quickly."

There was a pause. Then Mrs. Hill said, "It's more than that, isn't it? Employers want young people, don't they?"

"Perhaps it might be wise for you to consider alternatives, in light of your particular kind of experience," the young woman said. Her cheeriness had become brisk, signaling dismissal. "Have you thought about volunteer work?"

Mrs. Hill stood up quickly. "I *can't* do volunteer work," she said. "I have to *eat*." She was so angry that her hands were shaking. "I have spent the last thirty years of my life doing work that I thought was productive and important. Sometimes I liked being a wife and mother, and cooking dinners, and washing clothes and dishes, and keeping the house clean. Sometimes I hated it. But I always assumed that it was something worthwhile, something that needed to be done." She took a deep breath. "Now you tell me that my experience is only good for volunteer work; that I'm expected to go on working without pay."

Mrs. Hill was afraid she might start to cry in public. "I ought to be insulted. But I have a house payment due in nine days, and $400 in the bank, and I don't know how I'm going to live. I"m too frightened to be insulted."

She spent her mornings with the classified section of the newspaper and a pen, circling ads that looked promising. A sales company wanted trainees: NO EXP. NEC. Mrs. Hill called to ask for an application. "I'm fifty-three," she said, bracing herself. The man on the other end said he was sorry, but the program was only open to those under thirty-five--being an apprenticeship and so on. It wasn't much good training people who were going to retire right off, after all.

If housewives made a salary, she thought one night, *I'd be eligible for unemployment insurance.*

She called the Welfare Department. "It was just out of curiosity," Mrs. Hill told herself. She was not serious about welfare, but she was curious. "I just wondered," she

said to the man who answered, "what I'd be eligible for, *if* I were thinking about applying, I mean."

The man asked what her income was.

"I don't have one," said Mrs. Hill. "I don't have any money." She was appalled by the simplicity of it.

"Family and marital status?"

"Widowed," Mrs. Hill said. "My children are grown. They live out of state."

"Well," the man explained, that eliminated Aid to Families with Dependent Children. "Your only alternative would be General Assistance. Provided you meet all the requirements, you would be eligible for around $115 a month, and food stamps."

One hundred and fifteen dollars a month.

"What are the requirements?" asked Mrs. Hill.

"We'd send some forms off to your children first, just to make sure they are unable to support you," the welfare worker said . "Then we'd make sure that your housing payments don't exceed $96 a month, and that there is no other source of income for you."

"Wait a minute," said Mrs. Hill. "What if my housing costs more than that? I mean, I have a home, and my payments are more than $96."

It would be necessary, the man said delicately, for her to find other living arrangements.

Mrs. Hill closed her eyes. "For $96 a month?"

"Sometimes public housing is available if private apartments prove too expensive," the man said.

"Thank you," said Mrs. Hill. She put the receiver down. *I'm going to be sick,* she thought.

Mrs. Hill wrote to her daughters. "You know I am not a woman's libber," she told the younger one, who was. "But I feel as though after a life of contributing to my home and family, I've been left hanging in mid-air. I can't believe this is happening." They sent checks for $75 and $150, which Mrs. Hill did not deposit. She put them under the glass paperweight and tried not to look at them.

Someone suggested part-time babysitting. Mrs. Hill made up some 3x5 cards that said, "Childcare In Your Home. Experienced Older Woman. Reliable." She tacked the cards up in laundromats and supermarkets and placed an ad in the newspaper. The next week a woman called to ask whether Mrs. Hill would come look after her son on Thursday afternoon. Mrs. Hill spent four hours with the child, a docile, five-month-old baby who needed his diapers changed twice. She made $6.50. She deposited her daughters' checks.

Mrs. Hill has a part-time job now, in a small nursing home near the hospital where her husband died. She makes $260 a month and is not eligible for medical benefits because she works only twenty-five hours a week. The nursing home employs nine older women under similar conditions; they can give work to more ladies that way, the owner explains, even though they have a limited budget.

She will probably lose the house.[7]

In spite of all the odds against them, many elderly people do work and support families. More than 2.5 million people over sixty-five were counted in the work force in 1978, but the percentage of both elderly men and women in the work force has been dropping.

While society may not be able to do much about some of the obstacles preventing older people from working, certainly there is much that can be done to remove barriers to employment. One example, providing low cost transportation to available jobs, can be relatively inexpensive in terms of the return to society and to the individual. A lack of jobs does not mean a lack of work that needs doing. In experimental projects, retired craftsmen have given their services at reduced rates to people who cannot afford to pay the rate that would ordinarily be charged. A good example is the "Handyman Project" in suburban St. Louis, which, in 1975, provided services to over 500 low-income clients, many of whom were elderly themselves.[8]

People who would like to work but do not because of "poor health" or because they are "too old" might readily go to work if less strenuous jobs and shorter hours were available. Some successful experiments have proved this point; some allowed two or more older people to "share" a job and split the hours between them. There is nothing sacred about the forty-hour, five-day week. Employers find that when they tailor work and hours to the needs of the older employee, the worker compares very favorably to younger employees in terms of absenteeism, loyalty and overall performance.

WASTED RESOURCES

Americans in recent years have become very conscious of misused resources. Environmentalists have called public attention to the alarming rate at which we have been polluting our air, water and

landscape and depleting our natural resources. Massive efforts have been undertaken to clean up lakes and rivers, to reduce air pollution, to protect wilderness and wildlife, to recycle waste products and to reduce consumption of energy. But in thinking of national resources, we often forget that people also are resources, in fact our most important resource. Senator Hubert Humphrey addressed this problem in an article entitled "An American Paradox."

> American society embodies a curious paradox. On the one hand, we are devout believers in the work ethic. Not only do we judge our fellow citizens by the kind and quality of work they do, but we cruelly ostracize those who are not engaged in productive jobs--often through no fault of their own.
>
> Yet, on the other hand, we have steadfastly refused to commit ourselves to policies that would enable all to work--even when it is clearly within our power to do so.
>
> We are a nation that is founded on a belief in the dignity and worth of the individual. Yet we do not encourage all of the individuals to develop to their full potential, and we place little apparent value on the skills and resources of certain groups of our citizens.
>
> We are a nation that spends billions on welfare and unemployment compensation while vast numbers of the recipients themselves are asking for nothing more than the opportunity for fruitful work.
>
> These inconsistencies have traditionally been excused by the assertion that our society cannot "afford" full employment. But, increasingly, the question is being asked, "Can we afford anything less?"
>
> The argument that high unemployment is "necessary" to restrain inflation has been largely discredited by the recent drop in the rate of both unemployment and inflation. This is not surprising. Inflation is not created when idle labor and equipment are put back to work; it is created when we pay willing workers to remain idle.
>
> Moreover, the economic cost of unemployment is prohibitive. It is estimated that, since 1947, excessive unemployment above a three per cent minimum level has cost this society some $593 billion in goods and services foregone--a loss equivalent to $8,500, in 1975 dollars, for every American family.
>
> The income we have lost, and continue to lose, from our tolerance of high unemployment is, however, far from evenly distributed. The heaviest toll is taken on the unskilled, the immobile, and the inexperienced--the greatest untapped resource this nation has.

These, of course, are only the dollar costs of wasting our human potential. The social costs have already proved unbearable. Prison populations have reached new highs--increasing by an unthinkable thirty-five per cent in the past three years alone. Mental health and family counseling services are inundated with requests for help and the suicide rate has risen nearly five per cent this year, after rising more than 2.5 per cent last year.

The evidence now indicates that these conditions are directly related to our tolerance of excessive unemployment. A growing body of research shows that fluctuations in unemployment are directly followed by changes in the incidence of mental disorder, homicide, heart and kidney disease, alcoholism, suicide, infant and maternal disorders and general mortality. That relationship suggests the alarming conclusion that much of our national health and well-being is determined in large degree by economic decisions made in Washington.

It is abundantly apparent that we are not only wasting the talents of our unemployed adults and the potential of our young but neglecting the continuing contribution of our elderly as well. And, in doing so, we are not only losing the people's faith in society's institutions, we are wasting the very life of this nation.[9]

VOLUNTEER SERVICES

There is a great need to provide opportunities for older Americans to be of service. Necessity is the mother of invention, and society is now inventing ways to use the vast human potential that senior citizens represent. A recent poll shows that there are now about 4.5 million elder Americans involved in some sort of volunteer activity, as well as another 2 million who have indicated that they would like to do volunteer work.[10] In addition to hundreds of community-based organizations that provide an outlet for service, there are a number of national programs through which older people serve. Several of these come under ACTION, an agency of the federal government which includes Peace Corps, VISTA, RSVP, Foster Grandparents, the Senior Companion Program and SCORE.

The Peace Corps was set up to help developing nations around the world in social and economic development projects. About six per cent of the volunteers in the Peace Corps are retired Americans, whose skills and experience are of tremendous value to poorer nations struggling with age-old problems of illiteracy, hunger and disease. A domestic version of Peace Corps is VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) through which volunteers in anti-poverty projects help people in disadvantaged areas of the United States.

RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program) operates through various community-based projects to provide services to Americans of all ages. Volunteers serve as teacher aides, provide meals for shut-ins, and assist in hospitals, nursing homes, day care centers, museums and courts. Within one year of its organization in 1972, RSVP involved more than 28,000 senior citizens as volunteers. In addition, more than 10,000 senior citizens take part in the Foster Grandparents program, through which low-income older people provide companionship and guidance to handicapped children. Another outlet for low income senior volunteers is the Senior Companion Program in which companionship is provided to elderly people who are shut in or isolated.

Any person starting a small business needing the help and advice of a qualified retired business man or woman can get free or inexpensive assistance through SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives). In similar fashion, a private non-profit organization, International Executive Service Corps, sends volunteer business men and women (usually retired) to provide assistance in developing nations overseas. Each year about 700 to 750 overseas assignments, usually lasting two to three months each, are carried out by these volunteers in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

While some retirees have travelled off to distant lands to help people in other parts of the world, Louis Teitelbaum, a retired government worker, decided to use his time to help people of his own age here in the United States.

Case 10. Louis Teitelbaum

Three years ago, Louis Teitelbaum of Silver Spring, MD--then sixty-seven--was a frustrated and disillusioned civil servant. His age made him sympathize with the problems of the elderly, and his government experience had shown him firsthand that one of the most pressing of those problems was housing.

So as an auditor with the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) since 1962, he was "fed up with the whole business."

"They (HUD) were trying to destroy all the housing programs for the elderly," he now says. "They weren't sympathetic at all to the idea of helping the poor and disadvantaged."

"They were more interested in helping the building and real estate businesses than in helping the people."

So Teitelbaum called it quits, retiring almost three years earlier than he had originally planned, in fact. After catching up on some long-neglected personal business,

he began searching for an outlet for his frustrations, something that would satisfy his urge to right what he considered the wrongs around him.

He heard about a unique pilot course in paralegal training being offered free to senior citizens to acquaint them with ways to help their fellows. Now Teitelbaum is one of twelve men and women, aged fifty-five and over, who recently completed the course at the George Washington University Law Center. Today he is putting to use what he learned.

Teitelbaum works for the Gray Panthers, a metropolitan community organization representing the interests of the elderly and providing services for them. He does accounting work and helps in the organization's housing task force, which handles such concerns of the elderly as rent control and restrictions on condominium conversions.

His work with the Panthers is voluntary--he puts in "about two full days a week"--and he works on a paying basis for the National Paralegal Institute five or six days a month.

He also now feels he is "accomplishing something."

Example: An elderly woman who wandered in off the street to seek aid from the Gray Panthers had no place to rest and had not eaten in two days and had no shoes. She claimed she had applied for SSI (Supplementary Security Income, a program of Social Security) and had received no response. "We began to carry the ball to see if she could get some help, and she did," Teitelbaum recalls.

His working is "costing me money rather than making me money," Teitelbaum says, "but that doesn't matter because the satisfaction is there."11

The rapidly growing population of older Americans, combined with the growing practice of retirement, has presented society with a new challenge. There are now millions of older people who are unemployed, either voluntarily or involuntarily, and their numbers will continue to grow rapidly in years to come. These older people may be looked upon as a growing burden that will make constantly greater demands on the more "productive" younger generations who must support them. From another viewpoint, they may be looked upon as a growing reservoir of human resources whose skills, experience and wisdom can be tapped to serve society's needs. Which viewpoint will prevail will depend not only on how older Americans choose to use their retirement time. but also on what kinds of opportunities society provides to utilize what they have to offer.

MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT WORK AND RETIREMENT

MYTH: Most people retire because they are forced to.

FACT: While many people are forced to retire because of their age, most retire voluntarily and are satisfied with their retirement.

MYTH: Retirement means inactivity, declining health and an early grave.

FACT: The health of many people actually improves with retirement, as a result of the decline in tension and stress and more regular exercise and diet. For those who do maintain good health, this can be an active time when increased leisure affords opportunities to do things that were not possible earlier in life. There is no evidence that retirement, by itself, leads to early death. Much depends on how people prepare for retirement and use it when it comes.

MYTH: Older job applicants are not hired because they are harder to train and absent frequently because of illness.

FACT: Older job applicants are not hired because employers often *think* they are harder to train and will be absent frequently because of illness. Studies of performance by older workers on the job show that they generally perform as well as younger workers and are less likely to be absent.

MYTH: Anyone who really wants a job can get one.

FACT: A number of obstacles work to the disadvantage of older Americans who want to work. Lack of formal education, lack of transportation, unwillingness of employers to provide flexible hours, and a general bias toward youth are some of the obstacles. The obstacles increase substantially for older women and members of minority groups; they suffer discrimination in the forms of sexism and racism, in addition to ageism.

MYTH: Older people are a burden to society because they demand so much unpaid voluntary service.

FACT: There are a lot of volunteer services provided to older Americans, but they, in turn, provide extensive voluntary service to society through a variety of programs. Elderly retired persons have more leisure for voluntary service than most younger people who must still earn a living.

ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

1. Hold a discussion in the classroom on the issue of forced retirement. Discuss such questions as:

   a. Should all workers be required to retire at a certain age? Why? At what age?

   b. Should some workers be required to retire at a certain age? Why? At what age?

   Build on this discussion by arranging interviews between students and older workers, in the classroom, if necessary, but preferably in their place of work. Try to include workers who practice some special craft or skill that has benefited from long experience. If possible, arrange for students to see the older people working or at least see some samples or photos of their work. In addition to interviewing the workers about their work, the students might ask how these older people feel about retirement and especially about forced retirement. After the interviews, re-open discussion on the issue of forced retirement and provide an opportunity for students to express any changes in their ideas on the issue.

2. Arrange for students to visit various businesses, industries and institutions (possibly including their own school system). Ask the students to note the approximate number of employees of different age categories (teenagers, young adults, middle-aged, older adults) in each job category from low-paid unskilled workers to top executives. Precise information may be hard to get, but general patterns may be discernible. In class discuss such questions as:

   a. Are there types of employment in which age "pays off" and others in which it does not?

   b. Were any establishments visited in which there were no older adults employed? Was this apparently due to the work being strenuous or hazardous, was it simply because of favoritism toward youth, or were there other reasons?

   c. Should this, or does this, in any way affect your own thinking about choosing a career?

3. Ask students to bring newspapers to class. Divide the class into small groups and provide each group with sections of classified ads. Tell them to circle all employment listings that contain a specific age requirement and, in a different color, circle all those that seem to imply an age requirement. Ask each group to analyze the results and then share their findings with the class. Discuss these questions:

   a. Are the age requirements in the ads reasonable given the types of jobs, or are they simply arbitrary favoritism toward one age group or another?

b. What age group, or groups, seem to be most frequently discriminated against in the classified ads?

c. Would it be a good idea to eliminate all mention of age in advertising for employment and simply let each applicant be judged on the basis of other factors?

4. Arrange for a group of retirees to visit the classroom to discuss retirement. In advance, prepare such questions as the following with the class:

a. What do the retirees like and dislike about retirement?

b. How does retirement affect health, freedom, finances and use of time?

c. What are the most important things a person should do to prepare for retirement?

d. When should planning for retirement begin?

USEFUL TERMS FOR STUDENTS TO KNOW

AUTOMATION: The use of automatically operated machines to perform work, thus greatly reducing the need for human labor

CAREER: A job or profession that a person follows over a number of years

MANDATORY RETIREMENT: Required removal from a job because of age

ROLE: A function performed by someone, such as the role of "mother," "friend," or "worker"

STATUS: A position held in society which carries with it a certain role

VOLUNTEER: A person who by choice performs a service without pay

WIDOW: A woman whose husband has died

WIDOWER: A man whose wife has died

RECOMMENDED READINGS

BOOKS

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SIX. POLITICS AND AGING

"Old age, especially an honored old age, has so great authority that this is of more value than all the pleasures of youth." --Cicero

Throughout most of history, and probably prehistory as well, the elderly have typically wielded power out of proportion to their numbers. Although they represented only a tiny minority of the population in any society, older people, because of their experience, were assumed to be wise and capable of leadership. As long as they were able to contribute, elders were most frequently honored with the roles of advisers, lawmakers, judges and administrators.

Though treatment of the elderly varied greatly from one ancient society to another, it almost always included high respect for the elders. According to one leading authority on the behavior of primitive tribes, "The most striking fact about respect for age is its widespread occurrence. Some degree of prestige for the aged seems to have been practically universal."[1] In many societies, authority was inseparably linked with age, though with the shorter longevity of those times the elders were not generally in the sixty-five or older age range of today's senior citizens.

Many ancient councils took their names from the language of old age. Today in the United States, we still elect our most powerful representatives to the Senate, a word derived from the Latin *senex*, meaning "an old man." For those of advanced age who were no longer able to play an active role or contribute to politics, the Romans established old age homes where the aged male elite were given food, housing and yearly visits from the emperor. (Just as today, the elderly poor did not fare so well.) Perhaps one reason the state was so considerate of the very old was that the state was run by the "soon to be very old," that venerated class of men that was older than most of society, but still able to contribute. Cicero, who wrote extensively about old age, expressed the Roman precept that old people make the best governors by writing, "If there were no old men there would be no civilized states at all."[2] But Cicero also recognized that no one, on the basis of age alone, could claim security and respect. He wrote, "Old age is honored only on condition that it defends itself, maintains its rights, is subservient to no one, and to the last breath rules over its own domain."[3]

Power and influence in the hands of the elderly ranged from the ministerial right to speak first at meetings to absolute authority

based on age. Power of the elderly was dependent on the ability to contribute, even if that contribution was just knowledge and experience. When they became unable to contribute, especially if they became senile, elders were regarded as superannuated, or beyond the point of usefulness. Sometimes they were eliminated ritualistically or left to die, a practice for which modern day analogies are not difficult to find.

The tradition that political power rightfully resides with age was an important element of our own country's history throughout the colonial period and into the years following the War for Independence. Our early political history is heavily populated with men of advanced years. If Benjamin Franklin, for example, had been in his twenties instead of his eighties when the country was founded, he would probably have commanded much less respect and attention.

The history of this country, however, is not one of old men keeping things under control. It is one of rapid change and growth, thus explaining how and why political power was taken from the elderly. As an agrarian society became an industrial one, the three-generation farm household edged toward extinction. Young people moved to the city for factory jobs leaving behind their parents and grandparents with a vacant sphere of influence. The loss of political influence was not far behind the loss of family influence. The abandoned elderly could not even tell their descendants what time to go to bed, much less dictate their political views. As public education became more available, the knowledge that came with long life became less valuable. As technology introduced innovation and commerce ruled the nation, political power moved into the hands of those who knew how the world would work tomorrow, not how it worked yesterday.

Paradoxically, in a society steadily becoming more democratic, the power of older Americans declined as their numbers increased. In spite of the fact that the average age of population was higher, in time the American elderly approached a point of political impotence. If they could no longer influence their offspring politically, the only question left to the politicans patronizing them became, "What can you do for me?" The answer was, "Very little."

Older people scattered across rural America on impoverished farms had little money to fatten campaign chests and little mobility to get to voting booths. The only way they could exercise any degree of political power was to unite on a political issue and make themselves heard. History has shown that there have been only a handful of issues on which they were willing and able to act together.

THE PENSION MOVEMENT

Because it was a matter of immediate concern to virtually every older American, one of those issues was a pension plan. As more and more elderly people were no longer supported by their restless offspring, poverty became more and more a condition of the aged. In an

increasingly industrialized society, older Americans found that like other minorities they tended to be "last hired, first fired." The only relief was charity or the county poor house, which many viewed as worse than slow decay at home.

In the United States at the turn of the century, pensions were very much a moral issue. Thrift was an accepted virtue, and people who were penniless in an old age were perceived as people who had neglected to save. Pension proposals were viewed with suspicion. Some said they were socialism's foot in the door. Others said they weakened character. They were a threat to democracy, an affront to everything that was good and American.

In his book, *The Gray Lobby*, Henry J. Pratt describes the symbolism used by the pro- and anti-pension groups as the controversy over pensions began to become heated in the early part of the century. The symbolism exposes the strong moral-emotional tone of the entire debate. "The single, overriding symbol," Pratt says of one of the major pro-pension groups, "one used for its strong negative valence, was the county poorhouse as an institution."[4] Pratt goes on to describe the image of the poorhouse as a prison, a place that robbed the elderly of their dignity, to many less desirable than a coffin.

As for the opposition,

> The symbolism was broader in content...There is the image of the farsighted Founding Fathers of the republic shrewdly placing firm checks on the tendency of popularly elected legislative bodies to make extravagant use of tax resources. Also there is the "opening wedge" image seen as a dangerous step toward socialism. Finally, one finds the image of the "prudent citizen" wisely providing for his own retirement out of savings and not relying on wasteful government handouts.[5]

While all this rhetoric filled the air, a national double standard was very much in operation. Some older Americans literally starving for lack of a pension while others who had served in the military were collecting as much as 40 per cent of the national budget in veterans' pensions.

Beginning about 1910, pension proposals multiplied. They came from socialists, scholars, crackpots, economists and politicians of all sorts. Different methods of financing and different rationales were proposed. Some called for employee contributions. Others would be direct grants. Some were proposed to save the elderly, while others were recommended as ways to redistribute wealth or act as economic levers.

Most organizations promoting thse plans did not represent the direct use of political power by the elderly, with the notable exception of some of the California groups. The organizations were somewhat patronizing, although well-meaning; they did not even try to

mobilize the strength of those most concerned, the older Americans themselves. Of Abraham Epstein, founder of the American Association for Old Age Security (AAOAS), Pratt says, "It apparently did not occur to Epstein or to his allies in the Eagles, the AALL or the American Public Welfare Association to seize on the growing distress among America's older people, a development all of them knew about and emphasized, as a basis of political mobilization."[6]

This observation is verified by historian Clark Chambers, who says, "The failure of the pension forces to stir up the aged themselves to political action conspired to minimize its influence."[7] Influence of the elderly on the old age pension issue did not spring from political action but from the moral commitments of some, the fears of others about their own old age, and perhaps the guilt of those who had left aging parents behind.

One of the earliest pension plans was proposed by octogenarian Edward Everett Hale. It called for a $2 per year contribution from each worker until the age of sixty-nine. After that age a worker would receive $100 a year until death. While Hale's plan dates back to 1903 and was followed by hundreds more, the United States was far from a leader in this field of social legislation. Many countries, starting with Germany, had been installing progressive compulsory old age insurance programs since about 1870.

A good example of the "morality versus pragmatism" tone of this issue was the state of Massachusetts, which turned down 114 old age pension bills during the first thirty years of the century and forced solvent adults to support their parents. Although a check from the government would have been more dependable than a check from a son in Detroit and the legislature recognized the problem, it refused to do anything about it.

Meanwhile, non-government solutions were not working. While Americans talked of thrift, they either did not or could not practice it and personal savings were rarely adequate. Compulsory savings plans were proposed but were greeted with apathy and hostility. Insurance companies developed annuity plans which were largely ignored because premiums were too high. Americans looked to private industry to provide pensions, but few companies did. The private plans that existed were regarded as favors, not rights, and were not dependable.

The movement would not be silenced, even with "friends" of the elderly, such as the Massachusetts Commission on Old Age, saying such things as, "If such a scheme be defensible or excusable the whole economic and social system is a failure. The adoption of such a pension policy would be a confession of its breakdown."[8]

Old age pension proposals kept coming. Individual states began adopting plans, although most of them were weak and only reached a small percentage of older Americans. Real progress in pension plan adoption came not as a response to the emotional pleas, but when pension advocates finally became politically organized. The National

Order of Eagles set up lobbying groups in every state and found strength in cooperating with other pro-pension groups, even when their aims and methods were different. The Eagles held mass meetings, worked for publicity, and lobbied in state houses. Says one historian, "All the instruments of an American pressure group were skillfully orchestrated in a concentrated effort and it quickly began to obtain results."[9]

While scattered and often feeble pension plans brought the elderly one step forward, the depression of the thirties pushed them two steps backward. The pension plans touched the lives of only a few and, for most older Americans, the specter of poverty was very real.

To appreciate the true significance of pension activity in terms of the political power of older Americans, one must look to California which had a much higher population of elderly than the rest of the country. In California in the mid-thirties, the banner of old age pensions was carried by groups like the Ham and Eggs movement and the Townsendites. The California groups tended to compete with each other to see who could devise the "best deal" for the elderly. Some of the plans were illegal and some were financial folly. Historians disagree on whether or not these groups exerted enough influence to affect the eventual passage of the Social Security Act. Some say their activities came too late to matter. But good or bad, they were significant because they served as a catalyst to bring older people together and made them aware of their real political power.

Novelist Upton Sinclair rode to the Democratic nomination for governor of California in 1934 largely on the strength of his EPIC (End Poverty in California) movement, which called for a minimum old age pension of $50 per month. He might have won had it not been for the rivalry between EPIC and other pension plan groups. This important lesson in practical politics, learned the hard way, caused EPIC to form an alliance with another fast-growing movement, the Townsend Plan.

The Townsend Plan, led by sixty-seven-year-old Dr. Francis E. Townsend, proposed to provide a minimum income of $150 monthly to every retiree over age sixty in the United States. The pension would be financed by a special sales tax called a "transaction tax." Since older Americans would be encouraged to retire and take advantage of the pensions, the Townsendites argued, jobs would be available to relieve unemployment and help get the economy moving.

The first Townsend Club was formed August 17, 1934, in Huntington Park near Los Angeles. By November, 1936, there were Townsend Clubs in every state, possibly as many as 1200 in California alone. The shaky alliance between EPIC and the Townsendites lasted only about a year, and by 1937 EPIC had died out. The Townsend Plan also declined, partly because it became so heavily involved in California politics

that it could never develop into a truly national movement. The Townsend Clubs declined into social clubs and died out about 1942.

The Townsend movement was by no means a complete failure. First of all, it gave older people a new image. They were not portrayed as poor souls getting handouts from the government, but as "circulators of money" who had earned a living and were now entitled to enjoy the benefits of their labor. The Townsendites were zealous people who cared enough about a single issue to let it rule their vote, and before they were done they had sent many men to Congress and eliminated others. The Townsend Plan also made the entire country "pension conscious." The plan's most important achievement was that it organized older Americans themselves for political action, not simply others working in their behalf.

At the same time, we should also recognize the limits of success. It would be nice to think that all this activity culminated in a comprehensive national policy that put an end to impoverished old age. But the Social Security Act, as enacted in 1935, was at best a moral victory for the pro-pension forces. The premise of federal aid for the elderly had been accepted, but the practice left much to be desired. "In many respects," says historian W. B. Leuchtenburg, the Social Security Act "was an astonishingly inept and conservative piece of legislation." He continues:

> In no other welfare system in the world did the state shirk all responsibility for old age indigency and insist that funds be taken out of the current earnings of workers. By relying on regressive taxation and withdrawing vast sums of money to build up reserves, the act did untold economic mischief. The law denied coverage to numerous classes of workers, including those who needed security most: notably farm laborers and domestics. Sickness, in normal times the main cause of joblessness, was disregarded. The act not only failed to set up a national system of unemployment compensation, but did not even provide adequate national standards.[10]

Nonetheless, older Americans had proved themselves capable of political action. They had, like organized labor, become a national power. Their power was narrow in scope, but they would use it effectively over the years in supporting dozens of reforms in the Social Security Act. When it came to issues affecting the elderly, older citizens would never again be ignored.

THE BATTLE AGAINST MANDATORY RETIREMENT

It is ironic that the first major movement uniting older citizens for political action was for retirement pensions, and the second major movement was to protect older Americans from being forced to collect pensions before they were ready to do so. The issue of mandatory retirement has been for the second half of the twentieth century what

the pension issue was for the first half, a common cause for older Americans.

The issue of mandatory retirement has a complicated history in the United States. Even before the American Revolution had ended, the state constitution of New York contained a provision for the compulsory retirement of judges, apparently as a reaction to one case of a senile judge. Over the next few years other states made provisions for the mandatory retirement of judges or others in public office, and by 1820 there were seven states with compulsory retirement laws.[11]

Such laws, however, did not become a major social issue since they affected such a small minority of older people, those in public office. Mandatory retirement based on age did not affect broad segments of the population until the 1930's, and it did not become a major social issue until the 1960s and 1970s. As with most other campaigns for human rights, the battle against mandatory retirement was not won overnight. Victory has come piecemeal and is not yet total, in spite of recent dramatic advances.

An important milestone was reached in 1967 with the passage of the Age Discrimination in Employment Act which provides protection for workers between ages forty and sixty-five. In general, the law provides that discrimination in hiring, promotion, retirement and dismissal simply on the basis of age is unlawful. Years elapsed, however, before the Labor Department began to vigorously enforce the law. In the mid-1970s several major firms were required to pay millions of dollars in damages to people who had been dismissed, forced into retirement, or not promoted simply because of their age. The major weakness of the law, however, is that it provided no protection for people over sixty-five and therefore seemed by inference to place a samp of approval on the idea that people over that age should be retired whether they are ready or not.

The issue of mandatory retirement is by no means clear-cut. When the policy was first introduced by large businesses in the 1930s, it was generally regarded as a progressive step. Not only would it open up more opportunities for hiring and advancement, but it would also eliminate some possibilities for exploitation. Unfortunately, it also eliminated jobs for many people who were as happy and productive the day after they turned sixty-five as the day before. From the viewpoint of older people, mandatory retirement was seen more and more as an evil creeping across the business landscape, and it became one of those few issues that could unify older citizens for political action.

The issue, of course, is not retirement, but *forced* retirement at an arbitrary age. Most elderly people will set speed records in leaving dull jobs when they reach retirement age, whatever that age may be. Most of the population might be happy to retire at age twenty-five, if they could. But there are many older Americans who enjoy their work, have an enormous amount to offer, and view retirement living as one long boring afternoon in which their experience

and talents are unused. Millions of older people also want to remain employed because it is the only way they can adequately feed and clothe themselves.

The pressures exerted by many businesses to force out older workers are illustrated by the following letter from a fifty-six-year-old man.

Case 11. Chrysler Supervisor

In January of 1975 Chrysler Corporation's top officials made a decision to try and get their executives and salaried personnel, age fifty-five and over, to retire....this was to be a "voluntary retirement" and "a once in a lifetime deal" for those involved.

We (in personnel) were told that each person was to be approached carefully so as not to make it look like we were forcing the person to retire. He was to be given a letter, very cleverly written by corporate lawyers, which the person was to sign saying he voluntarily retired. In the letter the person was told that due to financial conditions there might have to be many more layoffs and that his job could not be guaranteed. This special retirement would never be offered again....

Little did I know that it applied to me. Suddenly I was called into my superior's office and told that immediately I no longer had anyone reporting to me. I was told that my position had been eliminated and I was given a clerk's job. When I said I couldn't type I was told to handwrite all the paperwork. After being a supervisor for many years in this department this was very embarassing to me...I might add that I had a top rating in the management development rating system and was at the top of my salary grade, making $25,000 a year.

To accept the...demotion with its loss in retirement benefits, insurance, etc., or to retire with my present insurance and special retirement rate were my two choices. To avoid affecting my Social Security future payments I chose to retire at age fifty-six although I could not afford it....My house is not paid for and you know what is happening to the cost of living...

I am only one of hundreds of executives, supervisors, and salaried personnel who were forced out in this manner.[12]

This was only one of thousands of letters received by NRTA/AARP in response to a column in their November, 1976 bulletin in which people were invited to write the associations about their personal

experiences with age discrimination. The letters came from former employees of many of the best known and largest corporations in the United States. Tney clearly demonstrated how widespread the practice of age discrimination is, in spite of the law.

In March 1977, when the battle against mandatory retirement was in full swing, the executive director of NRTA/AARP appeared before the House Select Committee on Aging to testify. To illustrate the unfairness of setting age sixty-five, or any other age, as an arbitrary point of retirement, she described an equally unreasonable alternative.

> Whenever mandatory retirement is discussed the matter of job distribution always surfaces. There are still those who believe in the folklore that says old people must step aside to make room for the young, and when jobs are scarce, age must be used to allocate jobs.
>
> If age is to be used as a basis for distributing jobs to workers, then I would suggest that we establish a lottery and draw numbers. This year, if thirty-eight is the age drawn, everyone aged thirty-eight will be thrown out of work. Next year, perhaps it will be twenty-nine, or fifty-two. Such a lottery would be precisely as equitable as firing people who are, say, sixty-five or refusing to hire them at, say, fifty-five.
>
> There will be those who argue that the thirty-eight-year olds have dependents, mortgages, and other obligations. Today we must recognize that many older people have similar responsibilities, and their numbers are growing. Not only do some older people have children to educate, a good many have mortgages to pay, and an increasing number are concerned with the problems of aging parents. With trends toward greater longevity and life-extending technologies, we can expect to see many more families with two generations of retirees.[13]

Beyond the content of such testimony and its value in persuading legislators by its logic, other important facts should be noted. By this time older Americans were being represented by well-organized and prestigious groups such as NRTA/AARP, the National Council of Senior Citizens and the Gray Panthers. All of these groups feel the responsibility to carry on the fight against ageism with the same vigor that others are applying against racism and sexism. Legislative committees feel compelled to hear testimony from the leaders of such organizations representing millions of older citizens.

The strategies used by these organizations in the fight against mandatory retirement demonstrate that important political lessons have been learned since the effort a half century earlier to win pension plans. There has been little infighting between the groups

working for a common goal. While there has been no organized coalition of the various groups into one massive bloc of political influence, all have worked toward a common aim without attempting to upstage each other.

The tools of political pragmatism were as evident in the hands of those who fought for elderly rights as they were in the labor movement, the women's liberation movement, and the civil rights campaign. No longer would older Americans politely ask the country to "do the right thing." Good sportsmanship had led nowhere; they had learned to use the political techniques that had worked for others.

For example, in speaking to Congress on mandatory retirement lobbyists for older citizens would condemn big business, saying that business wants mandatory retirement not for the benefit of older workers but because it gives them a chance to throw out long-term higher-paid employees and bring in new employees at beginner's salaries. These same spokespersons, on the other hand, might tell business executives that the practice of retiring employees costs the company money because of the expense of training newcomers.

Groups representing older citizens also learned that to make large numbers of people care about a problem it must be personalized. Do not tell them about the masses; tell them about someone with whom they can identify. Public relations were important. Tales of cancelled mortgages or of people freezing to death because their utilities were shut off for non-payment after they had been forced out of work showed up regularly in newspapers. The older person, long ignored, was now a page one victim of insensitve business and government policies, and people began to become sensitive to the "plight of the elderly" and the injustice of forced retirement.

The groups called for the abolition of any arbitrary age at which a person can be forced to retire and protection against age discrimination in employment for all adults. One formula proposed elimination of the upper age limit of sixty-five in the Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 and inclusion of age as a protected category under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. What was won in 1978 was the usual compromise such lobbying groups often have to accept.

Under the new retirement law of 1978, the minimum forced retirement age for the private sector is raised to seventy, with the exception of high ranking executives with comfortable retirement incomes, who can be retired at age sixty-five. Federal workers may not be retired at any age. However, no company or union contract can force a person to work until age seventy. Workers who continue in employment after sixty-five get a Social Security bonus of one per cent per year for each additional year worked. Practical politics had worked wonders where pleas for sanity and fair play had not. Abolishing forced retirement at age sixty-five made sense to legislators who realized that the result would be later and smaller withdrawals from a Social Security System that was moving toward bankruptcy.

The new law is far from ideal. It offers nothing to people who reach sixty-five before the end of 1978. In addition, it has been argued that if mandatory retirement is unjust at age sixty-five, it is just as unfair at seventy or eighty or one-hundred-and-three. However, the move toward abolition of mandatory retirement at any age is clearly underway.

Like old age pensions, mandatory retirement is indisputably an issue that is associated with the process of aging, not simply a matter which incidentally concerns those over sixty-five. It is on these kinds of issues that the political power of older Americans is being felt from the town hall to the White House. Mandatory retirement is only one facet of the more basic problem of age discrimination in general--in employment, in credit policies, in grants and licenses, and many other areas. So far, each issue around which people have mobilized has been specific. As we have seen in movements against racism and sexism, politically active older Americans in the future will probably lead the fight against ageism itself.

GROWING INFLUENCE

The growing influence of "gray power" was evident in 1977 when a Senate reorganization abolished the Committee on Aging. Older citizens across the country organized a massive letter-writing campaign which persuaded the Senate, with only four dissenting votes, to restore the committee. In 1981, the efforts of the new Reagan administration to make sweeping reductions in government spending were generally accepted, if not applauded, by the public. In most cases, the opposition of particular interest groups was swept aside as one program after another was cut. However, the administration had to back down when its proposals to cut Social Security benefits were met by a storm of opposition from people who had retired or were nearing retirement.

Pension plans and mandatory retirement are not the only issues on which older Americans have been able to unite for political action. Their influence has been felt at the local and state level. In small town America, funding cuts for local Councils on Aging and such actions as elimination of mini-bus service for the elderly and handicapped have brought the wrath of senior citizens down on local officials.

The new political power of older Americans does not come from culturally dictated sources like the familial power of a century ago or the tribal power of elders in primitive tribes. It comes, quite simply, from the large numbers of elderly people now living in the country and their involvement in organized groups. They are no longer silent and passive. In 1976 it was estimated that people fifty-five and over made up 30 per cent of the voting population, and that number continues to rise as the population becomes older. In certain areas of the country, the older population is much higher.

The new law is far from ideal. It offers nothing to people who reach sixty-five before the end of 1978. In addition, it has been argued that if mandatory retirement is unjust at age sixty-five, it is just as unfair at seventy or eighty or one-hundred-and-three. However, the move toward abolition of mandatory retirement at any age is clearly underway.

Like old age pensions, mandatory retirement is indisputably an issue that is associated with the process of aging, not simply a matter which incidentally concerns those over sixty-five. It is on these kinds of issues that the political power of older Americans is being felt from the town hall to the White House. Mandatory retirement is only one facet of the more basic problem of age discrimination in general--in employment, in credit policies, in grants and licenses, and many other areas. So far, each issue around which people have mobilized has been specific. As we have seen in movements against racism and sexism, politically active older Americans in the future will probably lead the fight against ageism itself.

GROWING INFLUENCE

The growing influence of "gray power" was evident in 1977 when a Senate reorganization abolished the Committee on Aging. Older citizens across the country organized a massive letter-writing campaign which persuaded the Senate, with only four dissenting votes, to restore the committee. In 1981, the efforts of the new Reagan administration to make sweeping reductions in government spending were generally accepted, if not applauded, by the public. In most cases, the opposition of particular interest groups was swept aside as one program after another was cut. However, the administration had to back down when its proposals to cut Social Security benefits were met by a storm of opposition from people who had retired or were nearing retirement.

Pension plans and mandatory retirement are not the only issues on which older Americans have been able to unite for political action. Their influence has been felt at the local and state level. In small town America, funding cuts for local Councils on Aging and such actions as elimination of mini-bus service for the elderly and handicapped have brought the wrath of senior citizens down on local officials.

The new political power of older Americans does not come from culturally dictated sources like the familial power of a century ago or the tribal power of elders in primitive tribes. It comes, quite simply, from the large numbers of elderly people now living in the country and their involvement in organized groups. They are no longer silent and passive. In 1976 it was estimated that people fifty-five and over made up 30 per cent of the voting population, and that number continues to rise as the population becomes older. In certain areas of the country, the older population is much higher.

votes of older citizens must, therefore, address themselves to these issues. Older voters who want to solve these problems must look to victims of crime, poverty, and poor medical care in other age groups for support. They cannot count on "gray power" alone to win their battles.

POLITICAL HABITS OF OLDER AMERICANS

One pervasive myth of aging is that people, as they age, become more alike. In fact, studies show just the opposite to be true. Politicians who think they can ride to victory on the assumption that they can judge people's political philosophies or behavior simply on the basis of age soon learn otherwise. There are relatively few issues on which older Americans have been able to unite for political action simply because they represent so many different interests and points of view.

One commonly held idea is that people become more conservative as they grow older. As evidence of this, people point out that the Republican Party, generally considered more conservative than the Democrats, is a minority party among all age groups of voters except those over sixty-five. However, among those over sixty-five, the Democrats and Republicans have about equal membership. These people did not become Democrats or Republicans after they reached sixty-five. In most cases, their party membership reflects a lifelong affiliation. The Democrats did not always have the leading edge they have today, and thus party affiliation among senior citizens reflects the generation to which they belong, not the age of the individuals involved. In other words, there are not large numbers of elderly people becoming Republicans; there are simply large numbers of Republicans becoming older. This is one example of what social scientists call a "cohort factor," or general characteristic of a peer group, and is not specifically age-related.

It is cohort factor, not age, that most likely explains why older people today tend to be more conservative on issues involving social values such as family, divorce and child rearing. Moreover, a University of Michigan study shows that older Americans are more liberal than young people on issues of social and economic welfare.[14]

Older citizens are also more likely to exercise their right to vote than younger citizens, in spite of the fact that they may have greater difficulty in getting to the polls. This tends to give older citizens more political clout. However, political scientists generally feel that the quality of political involvement is more important than the quantity. There is a popular conception that democracy is strongest when there is broad participation by the masses, as reflected in "get out the vote" campaigns. But it should be kept in mind that Adolph Hitler and the Nazi Party rose to power in the context of rising voter participation. More is not necessarily better.

Older Americans have in the past been somewhat disadvantaged in terms of political strength in spite of their strong voting record. Political effectiveness depends on a number of factors, including membership in groups which have political influence. As people have retired, their involvement in politically active organizations, such as labor unions, has declined. Older citizens are not becoming more aware of issues or appearing more frequently at the polls; they are becoming better organized and more involved in organizations that effectively represent their interests.

**No, we didn't go to the movies.
Grandma took me to a Gray Panther meeting.**

Source: Paull and Bülbül, *Everybody's Studying Us*, p. 38. Reprinted with permission of the artist.

In 1976, S.I. Hayakawa, age seventy, decided to challenge California's freshman Senator, forty-two-year-old John Tunney, for his seat in Congress. The *New York Times Magazine* expressed the view of many political experts when it said, "Hayakawa's most evident weakness is his seventy years--a politically awkward age for himself and his opponents." The article went on to say that Hayakawa's age was "old enough to be a liability but not quite old enough to permit Tunney to make it a point of open attack--too many elderly voters might be alienated."[15] Two days later Hayakawa beat Tunney, and one of the nation's youngest senators was replaced by the oldest new member of the Senate.

Is the growth of senior power causing more older people to make a bid for political office? Although Ronald Reagan's impressive victory on the eve of his seventieth birthday might cause us

to believe so, the trend so far seems to be in just the opposite direction. In 1957, there were 123 Congressional Representatives over the age of sixty. By 1979, there were only eighty-seven. In the Senate, the number declined from forty-three members over sixty in 1957 to twenty-six in 1979.[16]

Of course, not all political power is rooted in elective office, and it is interesting to note the skill with which some older citizens not in public office have wielded immense political power. Regardless of personal opinions of taxpayer revolts or slashes in tax-funded services, one has to admire the political skill with which California's "Proposition 13," one of the most significant movements of our time, was engineered by Howard Jarvis at age seventy-two and in his sixteenth year of "retirement."

MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT POLITICS AND AGING

MYTH: The idea of "gray power" or "senior power" is a twentieth century phenomenon.

FACT: Throughout most of history, in both primitive and complex societies, elders have traditionally been accorded leadership roles and have exercised power out of proportion to their numbers. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the power of older citizens in our own society declined but is now being revived as a result of growing numbers of older Americans and more effective political organization.

MYTH: Older people have pretty much the same political views and vote as a bloc to get what they want.

FACT: Older Americans vary widely in terms of their political philosophies, interests and preferences. There have been few issues on which they could unite, such as pension plans and opposition to mandatory retirement. Even when united, older Americans still represent a minority and require the support of other segments of the population to win victories. However, "senior power" has unquestionably increased and will continue to do so.

MYTH: People become more conservative as they age.

FACT: Older Americans tend to be more conservative than younger citizens on some issues, but more liberal on others. Their views are not a result of the aging process, but are strongly influenced by cohort factors--the set of attitudes, beliefs and values that characterize a generation. The fact that older people represent a broad spectrum of views is only

logical. Conservatives, moderates, liberals and radicals get old. The only thing they have in common is that they are all aging.

ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

1. Identify five major bills passed by the most recently adjourned session of the Senate. Discuss these bills with the class and have them reach a consensus on whether a vote for these bills would represent a "conservative" or "liberal" position. Have each student in the class write three or four letters to a senator to determine: (1) How old the senator is and (2) whether the senator voted for or against the bill. (In a class of twenty-five students, four letters written by each student would provide contact with all one hundred members of the Senate.) When the letters arrive, list the senators in order of age. After each senator's name, indicate the senator's vote on each bill as "liberal" or "conservative," in accordance with the class consensus. Discuss whether there seems to be any correspondence between the age of senators and their voting pattern. (This same activity could be done with the House of Representatives or with the state legislature, but it might require more letter writing to achieve a complete survey of members of the legislative body.)

2. Identify some bills currently proposed in your state legislatures that affect particular age groups, such as bills providing services to youth or older citizens. Have students trace the progress of these bills until they are passed or rejected. Specific student activities might include:

   clipping and posting articles and editorials relating to the bills

   writing to legislators for information about their own positions on the bills

   inviting spokespersons for and against the bills into the classroom

   conducting debates and mock votes within the classroom

   writing to legislators to advocate passage or rejection

3. Ask students to trace the career of a politican or leader. They can write or give an oral report emphasizing the accomplishments and failures of the person and the age at which each occurred. They should include any evidence of changes in the person's general political philosophy or performance with age.

4. Assign students to conduct a survey among people of different ages in the community. The survey should include such basic questions as:

   a. What are the names and political parties of your
      senators?
      congressmen?
      representatives in state legislature?
      mayor?
      governor?

   b. What congressional district do you live in?

   c. In what year will the next Presidential election take place?

   d. Which political party currently controls the Senate? House of Representatives? State legislature?

   e. How many senators make up the United States Senate?

   Ask the students to note the age of each person surveyed as a youth, young adult, middle-aged person or elderly person. Tell the students to compile the survey data according to the four age classifications, noting the number of correct and incorrect answers. Discuss whether the data indicate any pattern of age and political awareness.

USEFUL TERMS FOR STUDENTS TO KNOW

AGE DISCRIMINATION: Acting with prejudice against particular persons or groups because of their age, also referred to as "ageism"

CAMPAIGN: An organized effort by people working toward a common goal

COMPROMISE: An agreement which partially meets the desires or demands of opposing individuals or groups

COHORT FACTOR: General characteristic of a peer group

CONSERVATIVE: An attitude in favor of keeping things as they are or have been in the past

CONSTITUENCY: The people to whom an individual or organization is responsible and whom the individual or organization represents

DISSENT: Opposition or disagreement

LIBERAL: An attitude not bound by traditional forms

LOBBY: A group that speaks for a particular interest or cause and works for its success

MANDATORY RETIREMENT: Required removal from a job because of age or compulsory retirement due to age

RECOMMENDED READINGS

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SEVEN. LONGEVITY AND THE FUTURE

"We should all be concerned about the future, because we will have to spend the rest of our lives there."
--Charles F. Kettering

The only certainty about the future is that it will be different from today. While predicting the future is always risky, it is also inevitable. All of us feel a need to know what lies ahead, and we habitually find ourselves speculating about what tomorrow will bring. It is much easier to predict tomorrow's weather than it is to predict the situation of society twenty-five, fifty or one hundred years in advance. Those who predict the future for society do so in essentially the same way that meteorologists predict stormy weather. They simply gather all available information about the direction in which things are headed, establish trends, and then imagine the outcome assuming the trends continue. The first step is to look at the past.

Essentially there are only three factors that affect the size and age distribution of a population--birth, death, and migration. All three have contributed to the rising age of the American population. Through most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the birthrate has been declining. The "baby boom" of the 1940s and 1950s was an exception to the general pattern, but in the 1960s and 1970s the decline continued.

There has also been a declining death rate, particularly in recent decades, due mainly to medical advances. Reduced immigration, largely as a result of restrictive immigration laws passed early in this century, has also contributed to increasing the median age. Immigrants to the United States tended to be younger than the general population, since many came to find work and raise families in a new land.

The average age of Americans at the time of the American Revolution was about sixteen, and it remained stable until it began slowly to rise after the 1820 census. As the nation celebrated its bicentennial, the average age was nearly thirty. If present trends continue, the average age by the end of this century will be approximately thirty-five and will approach age forty by the year 2030.

While the number of people over age sixty-five is increasing, the average age within that generation of senior citizens is also climbing. Approximately four out of ten older Americans have passed their seventy-fifth birthday, and this includes over 17,000

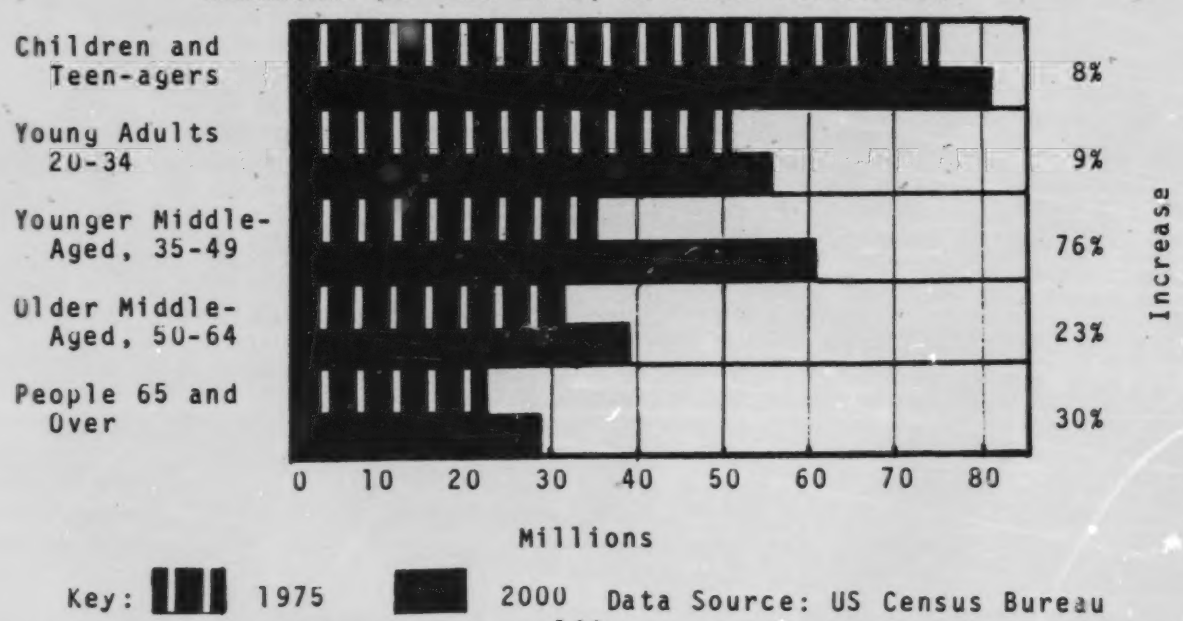
centenarians--about 70 per cent more than were reported in the 1900 census. We may soon have to redefine the term "senior citizen," and there are already clear indications that the age at which people are considered "old" is rising.

It is impossible to project what the population or age mix of society will be in the distant future. Too many unknowns are involved. Will there be another baby boom? Will some major disaster decimate the population? Will dramatic new advances in medical science radically increase the life span? However, some cautious predictions for the near future can safely be made, since we know how many people are presently alive in each age span and what the current birth and death rates are. Based on this data, we can be reasonably certain that the American population will continue to grow over the next several decades. Even though the current birthrate is slightly lower than the "replacement" rate of two children per couple, the number of females already alive who will be in their childbearing years is increasing. Thus the population of children and teenagers is expected to grow by eight per cent between 1975 and 2000.

The baby boom of the 1940s and 1950s will become a "middle-aged boom" by the end of the century. Projections are for a huge 76 per cent increase in the group aged 35-49 between 1975 and 2000, as compared with only nine per cent growth for the category of young adults, aged 20-34. Approximately fifty years from now when today's high school students are becoming senior citizens, the "middle-aged boom" will have become a "senior boom." By that time, the population over age sixty-five may well be over 50 million.

Figure 3.

AMERICANS IN YEAR 2000, AN AGING POPULATION



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NATIONAL AND GLOBAL IMPLICATIONS

As might be expected, business and industry are very much aware of the changing age structure and are planning accordingly. The general business forecast for the years ahead is very favorable, but business will have to plan very differently in terms of what to produce and how to advertise and market products. Since all age groups in the population except teen-agers will continue to rise for some time, there will generally be an increasing demand for goods and services.

Certain things can be anticipated fairly easily. For example, there will be an obvious need for more housing and services for the elderly. With a continuing trend toward earlier retirement and with more people with adequate retirement incomes, a good market for travel services and recreational opportunities for older people can be expected. Smaller families will mean more working wives in the young adult and middle-aged group. Consequently, family incomes should greatly increase, so that the working wife will be able to afford her own new car. Although families will be smaller, the outlook for producers of such goods as baby furniture and baby clothes is good, because a much greater proportion of births will be of first children who require them, as compared to subsequent children who are more likely to have things "handed down."

The effect of "cohort factors" is more difficult to predict. These are the attitudes and values which people of a generation tend to carry with them throughout life. To distinguish true cohort factors from passing fads, they must be observed over long periods of time. Will the demand for blue jeans, rock music, and fast foods continue as teens and young adults move into middle age? If their tastes change, will they change in the direction of today's middle-aged or will they change toward whatever becomes popular among the young?

Such questions may be important to the business community, but in a broader sense we might ask what attitudes and values people will carry through life as a result of having lived through the third quarter of the twentieth century? Clearly experiences such as Watergate and the Vietnam War have influenced public thought. Does this mean that the attitudes toward politics, war, and peace of middle-aged and older people of tomorrow will be substantially different than those of today's elders? What will be the long-term impact of such movements as civil rights and women's liberation on the roles and expectations of tomorrow's older people? Will tomorrow's older people be more like the older people of today, or more like themselves as they are now? The unknowns are multiple and pose fascinating questions.

A PROBLEM FOR THE WORLD

The United States is by no means the only country experiencing changes in population longevity and age distribution. In fact, we

can get some perception of both our past and future by comparing the age structure in the United States with other countries. Figure 4, prepared by the Population Reference Bureau, compares the age distribution of the United States with the "young" population of Mexico and the "older" population of Sweden.

Virtually every nation in the world today is experiencing problems associated with increased longevity and changing age mix. Statistics compiled for the United Nations show that the world population over age sixty increased by 100 million (to a total of 291 million) between 1950 and 1970. Future projections were of an increase to 406 million in 1985, and nearly 585 million by 2000--an increase of almost 100 per cent in thirty years.[1] The less developed nations are expected to have the greatest percentage increases in the older age groups as modern standards of sanitation, nutrition and medical care spread. For these countries, the situation is critical because they lack institutionalized programs to provide for the elderly and lack resources to establish them. At the same time, modernization is breaking down traditional systems of family support.

CHANGING LIFE CYCLE

Especially for Americans, another important change has been the way people live out their life cycles. As late as the year 1800, the life cycle of a couple who lived into their sixties would typically proceed as follows:

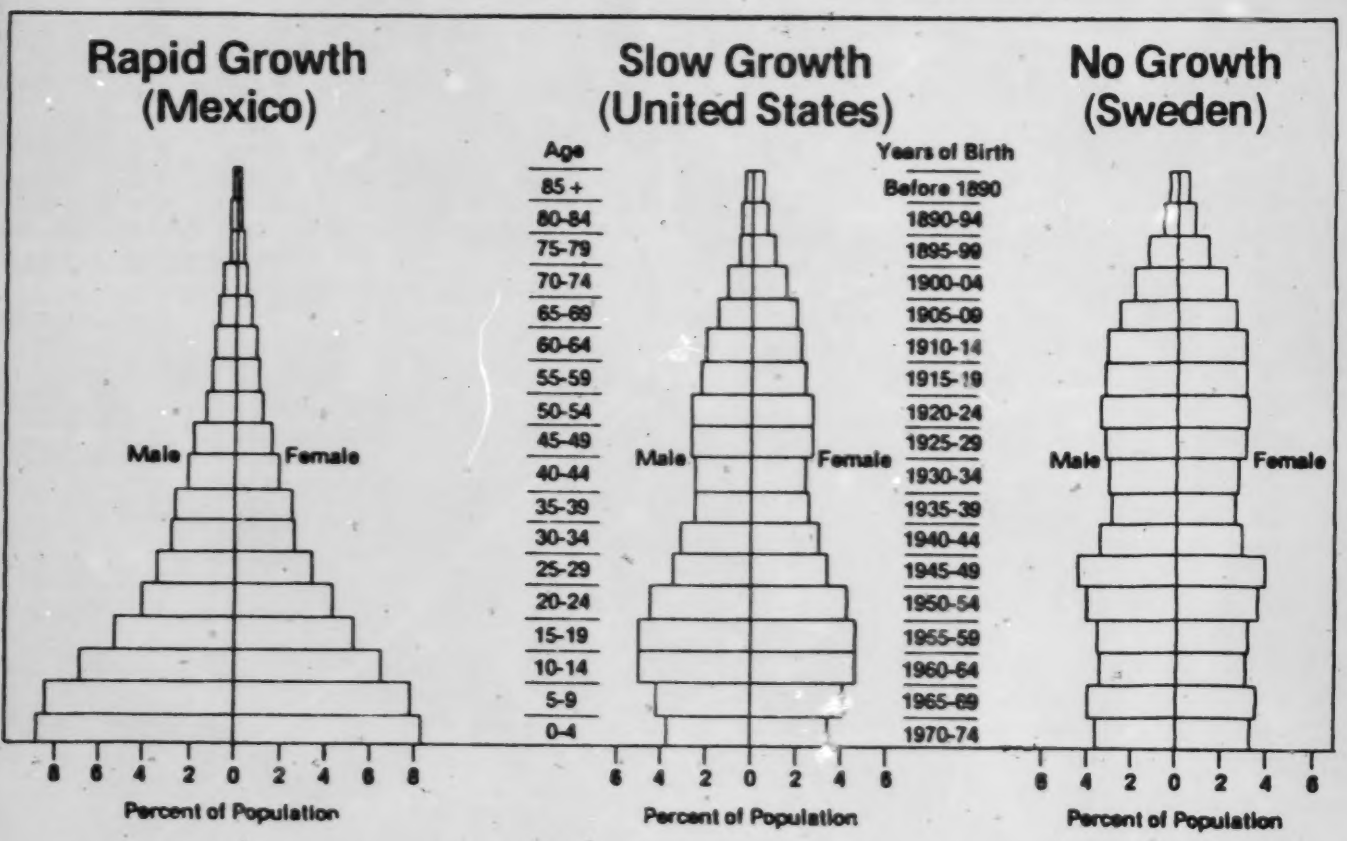
Mean Age At:	Male	Female
First marriage	25	22
Last birth	42	39
Last child comes of age	63	60
Last child marries	67	64

Retirement from parenthood was as rare as retirement from work. Older people seldom lived alone. They remained part of the nuclear family with their own children and continued to head the household until they died.[2] This pattern had continued for about 150 years, but in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the pattern changed drastically. David Hackett Fischer described the change this way:

> ...Almost everyone married in early America, and once the responsibilities of family were taken up, they were not laid down until the end of life. The first baby was born within a year of the marriage, and the last when the parents were in their mid-forties. Children were a continuing presence; usually the last child did not leave home until after one or both parents had died. That pattern prevailed until 1800...
>
> But then the major break occurred....Early in the nineteenth century parents began to live beyond the period of

Figure 4.

Age-Sex Population Pyramids: Rapid, Slow, and No Growth Models



SOURCE: Population Reference Bureau, Inc., Washington, DC 20036

their children's dependency. In 1850, they did so only by a year or two on the average. But by 1950 the last child was grown and gone from home when most parents were still in their forties--and still in the full vigor of adult life. A new period of life had come into being: That between adulthood and old age.[3]

Between 1902 and 1975, that period of retirement from parenthood increased by an average of eleven years.

A ROSY FUTURE WITH ZPG?

The main reason that people now have a period of "retirement from parenthood" is that families are having fewer children. If the present trend in birthrate continues, we will soon have a situation of population stability known as "zero population growth" or "ZPG." Roul Tunley is one of a number of optimists. He claims, "Our lives are becoming better as we experience the most rapid birthrate decline in U.S. history."

> For the first time in history, American women are producing babies at the rate of only 1.9 per family. This represents one of the most arresting turnabouts in population annals. As late as 1961, we were producing children at the rate of 3.6 per family, thus creating the century's biggest baby boom. The dramatic plunge has brought America closer to a Utopian goal: zero population growth--the "break-even" point of 2.1 children per family at which births balance deaths, and the population remains stationary. Because of the baby boom when our soldiers came home from World War II, with the resultant large number of women of childbearing age today, ZPG will still be a long time coming. But, at the current birthrate and level of immigration, America should reach a population plateau sometime in the first half of the 21st century...
>
> Obviously, our road to ZPG is not without bumps, especially for industries that have catered to the baby boom. Gerber Products, for instance, which used to advertise 'Babies Are Our Business--Our *Only* Business,' has found it necessary to branch out into such fields as clothing and insurance. But on balance, advantages for all of us far outweigh disadvantages. Some benefits are beginning to show up now. We don't have to wait two generations, until we finally reach a stable population, to see what life will be like for Americans under ZPG.
>
> Take an area that has already felt the impact of a declining birthrate--hospitals. I recently visited Washington's D.C. General Hospital, which has had one of the biggest declines anywhere in maternity patients. In 1961, the hospital delivered 6873 babies. Last year, the number was down to 2842.

"We look upon a lower birthrate as an opportunity, not a cause for alarm," department head Dr. Frank Bepko says. "We concentrate on giving quality service." Maternity patients now stay four days, instead of twenty-four hours as they did at the height of the baby boom. And with fewer mothers to look after, nursing and other treatment so improved last year that the hospital suffered not a single maternity mortality. (It had previously averaged four deaths a year.) Dr. Bepko turned one empty ward into an in-patient cancer clinic, another into a center for natal research. Other unused space is being converted into a walk-in clinic for Pap tests, breast-screening, and other cancer-prevention services.

All over the country, there have been similar substantial savings and improved medical services because of fewer births. Typical is Cincinnati, Ohio, where the number of hospitals with obstetrical departments has been reduced from eleven to six. As a result, the city has saved $8 million in new hospital construction.

The birth dearth has also had a strong impact on our educational system, with both beneficial and negative results. With two million fewer children of elementary school age now than a decade ago, some lower grade classrooms are empty, and an estimated 130,000 school teachers are out of work. But a declining enrollment also has its advantages. Consider the experience of Somerset School in Chevy Chase, Maryland, which foreshadows what we can expect under ZPG. In 1961, Somerset was jammed with 594 pupils. Today, it has 397. Says principal Sylvia Cohen, "With fewer pupils, we now have five empty classrooms to devote entirely to special activities. One room is used for an art center, another for music, still another for Head Start. Two are for children with learning difficulties." More individual teaching is also possible, since the student-to-instructor ratio is reduced.

Another area where ZPG promises a rosy future is economics. Without exception, those nations nearest ZPG have the greatest prosperity. "A growing population may mean larger markets, but a stationary population almost always means richer ones," says Frederick S. Jaffe, of Planned Parenthood. Indeed, it is now estimated that the average American family's annual income at the end of this century will be $21,000, instead of the present $12,000 (in terms of current purchasing power). And with fewer children, each family will be able to spend more on education, travel, second homes, recreation and other things.

School taxes should also benefit from ZPG. According to population expert Ben J. Wattenberg, we are entering a favorable period during which a large crop of "tax-eaters" (students from the baby boom) are graduating into a large crop of taxpayers. "There will be an increasing number of people available to pay taxes for a decreasing number of schoolchildren," he predicts.

Under ZPG, of course, the population will get older. Eventually, the median age will be thirty-seven, not twenty-eight as it is now. In general, this should be an asset. For it is expected that the combination of age and experience, plus the better education resulting from smaller families, will lead to a higher productivity, shorter hours and greater job stability. People will demand, and get, better social legislation--retirement benefits, pensions, improved health-delivery services, etc. Moreover, since over half of those arrested are under twenty-five years of age, many people feel that crime rates should go down. Cities will be easier to live in and more attractive to a growing middle class. Automobile accidents should fall off with a more mature population at the wheel.

The advantages of ZPG are beginning to be so apparent, in fact, that many people want to bring it about a lot sooner than it will arrive at the present birthrate. But most responsible demographers feel that, for the United States at least, a policy of gradually levelling off the population is far preferable to an abrupt drop. And the Presidential Commission established in 1969 to examine the growth of our population called for a government policy to *gradually* slow and eventually halt U.S. population growth.

Happily--according to the latest Census Bureau figures--we are doing just that. We are headed in precisely the right direction for at least one national goal. But, as people who favor a reduced population growth never tire of pointing out, when you're on the road to ZPG the important thing is to keep up the momentum. Never speed up and never slow down. Otherwise, the journey may get rough.[4]

PAYING FOR THE FUTURE

Roul Tunley has presented one view of what a declining birthrate may mean. There are, however, some people who do not see such a rosy future for a population constantly growing older. As the largely dependent young population decreases, the largely dependent older population is increasing. If these two groups balanced out, the economy could simply shift toward more production of goods and services for older people. But would a decline in children mean a shortage of workers to produce and pay for the goods and services of tomorrow? Some people are starting to question whether we can afford the future, especially the growing needs of an older population.

Demographers estimate the economic impact of changing age ratios on a society by using a simple "dependency ratio" formula which works as follows:[5]

$$\text{Dependency Ratio} = \frac{\text{People 0 Through 14 + People 65 and Over}}{\text{People 15 Through 64}} \times 100$$

The formula assumes that people under age fourteen or over age sixty-five are, on the average, likely to consume much more than they produce. Thus they are considered dependent on the "economically active" part of the population. These are the people aged fifteen through sixty-four, who, on the average, are likely to produce more than they consume. For example, a country with a dependency ratio of forty-five would have about forty-five people, mainly old and young, dependent on the support of about one hundred people in the economically active sector. In 1970, some of the poorer developing nations of Latin America and Africa had dependency ratios of one hundred or higher, mainly because they had such a high proportion of children who had not yet become part of the work force.

Following this formula, the dependency ratio for the United States decreased from 1900 to 1940, then rose considerably from 1946 to 1960. This was largely due to the "baby boom" that followed World War II when birthrates were very high. By 1975, the dependency ratio had fallen to 56.6. If present trends continue, the declining birth rate will tend to reduce the ratio, but it will be offset in future years by a growing population of unemployed elderly people. Several important implications for American society should be explored.

THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL SECURITY

One very practical concern for the near future is whether the Social Security System can survive. Social Security was set up in 1935 to provide a modest supplemental income for disabled or retired workers and their dependents. The system is financed by a special tax called the Old Age, Survivors' and Disability Insurance (OASI) Tax. OASI taxes are paid in equal amounts by the worker and employer according to how much is earned. Social Security benefits alone were never intended to be enough for a person to live on, but as a supplement to personal savings and other pension income.

Social Security is a government operated insurance program. It is based on the principle that those who are working will pay enough OASI taxes into the system to cover the benefits paid out to disabled and retired workers and their dependents. But Social Security is now beginning to feel the strain of paying benefits to a rapidly growing population of retired people who are living longer. The situation has grown critical for several reasons. In recent years, Congress brought several categories of workers under the system who were not originally covered by Social Security. Because of the high rate of inflation, Congress has substantially increased benefits to meet the rising cost of living. New programs have been added. The most important of these is Medicare, which was established in 1972 to help the elderly offset the high cost of medical care. In 1979 alone, Medicare cost over $30 billion. Though Congress has greatly increased the OASI tax to help pay for these expanded benefits, the money coming in to Social Security has not been enough to match the money going out.

The first Social Security benefit check in the amount of $22.54 was paid in January 1940, to Ida M. Fuller, a retired bookkeeper from Vermont. By the time Mrs. Fuller died, twenty-five years later, at age one hundred, she had received more than $20,000 in benefits. Since Social Security began, a total of more than $750 billion has been paid out in benefits, and expenditures rise sharply each year. Between 1971 and 1980, the total amount paid out by Social Security grew from less than $30 billion to more than $100 billion. Considering the demands that would be placed on the system in the future, some people find it difficult to imagine how the system can continue to operate.

When the first Social Security benefit checks were paid in 1940, there were about 150 workers paying into the system for each person receiving retirement benefits. Today there are only about three workers paying for each retired beneficiary. Unless the system for providing for retired workers changes, it is estimated that the Social Security system will be in debt by more than $1 trillion by the year 2048.[6]

One of the most severe critics of the system is Warren Shore, author of *Social Security: The Fraud in Your Future,* who claims that Social Security today amounts to a vast welfare system in which the working classes are paying heavily to support the elderly and that the system will be unable to provide for today's workers in their own retirement years. Mr. Shore writes:

> The Social Security system is looking to an entire generation of young Americans for a very large job it has in mind: saving itself. The current generation of Americans under forty has been chosen for the job and they may start immediately, providing they have the following qualifications:
>
> --a willingness to pay from twenty to fifty times as much in Social Security payroll taxes as the generations before them;
>
> --an acceptance of the fact that, but for a small minority, there is no chance they will receive a fair value for their money;
>
> --a sense of personal sacrifice, among the women in this group, to be subjugated and exploited much worse than the others;
>
> --a desire to underwrite personally the bleak future of this system by allowing the Internal Revenue Service to tax their pay twice for the same Social Security "contribution."[7]

The need to reform Social Security became a major and controversial issue in Congress, but compromise legislation was finally worked out late in 1977 just before adjournment. The

passage of this legislation did not solve all the problems of financing Social Security, but major steps were taken toward making the system financially sound. The laws were revised to provide periodic increases in both the percentage of payroll tax and the taxable wage base. It was hoped that this increased revenue would "buy time" for the Social Security system, at least until 1988. But by 1981, the Reagan Administration was claiming that the system was in danger of bankruptcy unless significant steps were taken to reduce benefits. Among the proposals under consideration were increasing the age of eligibility for retirement benefits, perhaps to sixty-eight, and eliminating some of the non-retirement benefits.

One effect of the concern for financing social security and other pension systems has been to increase the number of proponents of keeping older Americans in the work force. In hearings before the Senate Special Committee on Aging in July 1978, Dr. Harold Sheppard pointed out that by the year 2000 there will be eight million Americans over age eighty, and he asked, "How will the increasing proportion of Americans in their early sixties in the next century support these octogenarians if they themselves are retired?"[9] Labor Secretary Ray Marshall responded that it might be necessary to expand employment opportunities for the elderly. Certainly keeping older people in the work force and off the retirement rolls was one motivation behind the recent measures which banned mandatory retirement for most federal workers and increased the minimum age for mandatory retirement in the private sector from sixty-five to seventy.

DEMANDS ON OTHER PENSION SYSTEMS

Virtually all pension systems, private and public, already feel the financial squeeze or will do so over the next several years. Among the most generous pensions are those for federal employees, especially for those in military service. Congressman Les Aspin of Wisconsin expressed his concern for how these obligations will be met in an article entitled "The Burden of Generosity."

> For decades servicemen were considered to be badly underpaid. The government held out a generous pension to offset the poor salaries. But in the 1960s Congress decided that military pay scales should be substantially upgraded, to achieve parity with those of civilians. At that time Congress might logically have reviewed the pension system, but chose not to. Today, in the words of the Defense Department itself, "The current system provides excessively liberal benefits when compared with most civilian sector plans."
>
> The average officer retiring this year is a forty-six-year-old lieutenant colonel receiving a pension of $15,400 a year; his opposite number in the enlisted ranks is a

forty-one-year-old Army platoon sergeant getting $6,400 a year. These retirees continue to enjoy, among other benefits, subsidized medical care, military commissaries with cheaper food and free aircraft flights.

Pensions alone will absorb 8.5 per cent of the defense budget this year [1976], or $8.4 billion. Only twelve years ago pensions consumed 2.5 per cent of the defense budget, or $1.2 billion. By the year 2000 the annual pension bill for the military is projected to be about $34 billion...As Sen. Thomas F. Eagleton recently warned, "Unless we act now, in future years, the classic question of economic priorities could become 'guns or pensions.'"

...The average couple retiring at sixty-five on Social Security this year can expect to receive $69,000 over the rest of their lives, assuming there is no change in the rates. The average enlisted man retiring this year will get $143,000 *before* he turns sixty-five, the average officer $283,000.

In recent years, we as a nation have acquired a new sense of social responsibility to the aged. There is no reason to back away from that commitment. It is becoming imperative, however, that we examine the pension problem in detail, pay heed to its economics, and consider whether we are not founding and funding a privileged elite among our retirees.[10]

Representative Aspin estimated that the U.S. Government is already committed to pension obligations totalling $300 billion just for those already receiving pensions or those working now for the government who will be entitled to pensions in the future. When government obligations to housing, medical care, transportation and other services to the elderly are added, it is obvious why some people are concerned about the ability of the country to meet its commitments to a rapidly growing population of older Americans.

THE SCANDINAVIAN MODEL

Those who question whether the United States can afford the future, especially in providing for the elderly, might consider the model provided by the Scandinavian countries of Sweden, Norway and Denmark. These countries have already reached the plateau of stable population toward which the United States seems to be heading. Scandinavians pay extremely high taxes, but in return they receive extensive social benefits from birth to death covering housing, education, medical care, recreation and other services. Compared to the United States, Scandinavians provide very well for their elder people.[11]

In each Scandinavian country, there is a national agency especially charged with providing for the elderly. Programs are funded by the national government, but the responsibility for carrying out the programs rests mainly with local authorities.

The housing program begins with the idea that "everyone should have the opportunity to live independently in their own homes for as long as possible." Thus elderly people who want to remain in their own homes are entitled to a wide range of home services, including meal preparation, nursing care, laundry, housecleaning, home maintenance and shopping. In many cases, the government reimburses family and friends for providing these services when they cannot be provided otherwise. Special low interest, or no interest, loans are made to those who want to improve their homes or apartments, and in Norway no payments are required on these loans as long as the borrower continues to live in the dwelling.

In both rural and urban areas, the governments have financed or constructed special housing for the elderly. In many cases, the housing provides a range of facilities for people who are totally capable of caring for themselves as well as for people who need various levels of care. They often include nursing home facilities to which residents can move when they are no longer able to care for themselves. People moving into nursing homes are allowed to bring their own furniture, rather than having to adjust to a completely new environment surrounded by unfamiliar institutional furnishings.

All people, regardless of work experience, become eligible at age sixty-seven for a basic pension which is periodically adjusted according to the cost of living. In many cases, people may also be eligible for a supplementary pension based on earnings. Retired workers receiving both a basic and supplementary pension typically receive an income which is about 70 per cent of the income received by the worker during highest earning years. In Sweden and Denmark, people may retire earlier than sixty-seven with a reduced pension, and in Norway they may delay retirement until age seventy with a higher pension.

Health care is provided free or at little cost to pensioners in all three countries. Nursing services provided at home are free. Pensioners in Sweden are reimbursed for the major costs of doctor's fees, prescriptions and travel to medical facilities. In Norway, retirees living at home pay reduced taxes if their medical expenses are high.

All three countries provide educational opportunities for the elderly, including special high schools where a variety of courses are offered to retirees. Elders also pay reduced transportation fares, even on ships and airplanes, and reduced rates for movies and theaters. Norway provides free television, radio and telephones to elders who cannot afford to purchase them.

The Scandinavian programs do have some problems. There is a shortage of qualified personnel to administer all the services demanded by a growing population of older people, especially in rural areas. The movement of younger people to the cities has created a shortage of people in the countryside to provide services to the elders. In spite of these difficulties, the Scandinavian countries have provided a model of what can be done when advanced industrial societies decide to commit themselves to providing a decent and dignified life for their older citizens.

A QUESTION OF PRIORITIES?

Could the United States provide for its elders as well as the Scandinavians? According to Irma Hunt, we could, but we haven't done so because our priorities are wrong. We are willing to spend a lot of money, but so far we have spent it on the wrong things.

> ...The European nations have simply decided that their national priorities differ from ours.
>
> These countries have decided to spend their money at home, to enhance the daily lives of their citizens. In contrast, we spend a great deal of our money supporting a vast military establishment...One authority added up our military budgets since the end of World War II, and found that the funds total $1,500,000,000,000 [one and one-half *trillion* dollars], or two-thirds of the value of all man-made national wealth in our country. Meanwhile, many peaceful programs get short shrift. This is causing hardship for great numbers of Americans. In a recent issue discussing the military budget, the *New York Times* carried this letter to the editor:
>
> "My heart goes out to that marvelous older generation which kept this country together during the Depression and saved the world for democracy during World War II. They suffered to give us what they could, and worked long, hard hours to do so.
>
> "We enjoy short workweeks, prosperity and peace, a great legacy. And what do our parents get as their reward? A fixed-income retirement with runaway inflation, especially in basic, essential commodities...This older generation deserves better; they paid their dues in spades."...
>
> Observers say the public attitude in this country must change before life will get economically better for older people.
>
> One way to change that attitude would be for older people to stop apologizing for wanting a fairer share of the economic pie. Great numbers of older people have

been brainwashed into thinking that they should quietly accept our society's cruel treatment of the aged.

Perhaps, some day soon, older people's voices on that subject will be raised--and they will be heard.[12]

Huge sums of money go to feed the military at the expense of retirees.

SOURCE: *Modern Maturity*, February/March 1975, p. 22. Reprinted with permission from MODERN MATURITY . © 1975 by the AARP.

The outrage expressed by people like Irma Hunt is already producing a reexamination of national priorities, and human services, especially to the elderly, have vastly increased in recent years, but not without controversy. We are entering the age when it is common to have four generations of a family living at one time. While we have already reached a stage at which parents frequently have a lengthy period of retirement from parenthood as well as work, many parents are suddenly discovering that they have a new role, that of caring for an elderly parent. The distinction between these two generations of older Americans is sometimes referred to as the "young old" and the "old old." The "young old" often find themselves caught in a dilemma. They oppose rising taxes which reduce their own retirement resources, but they favor expanding services for older Americans because of the needs of their "old old" parents or the needs they anticipate for themselves.

Critics of rising public expenditures to meet the growing needs of older Americans often overlook the alternatives. One can:

1. expect all people, no matter how low their income, to personally lay aside sufficient funds to meet their own needs in old age,

2. expect all elderly people to be supported by their offspring or relatives, or
3. expect older Americans to go without necessities.

Providing public services does require payment of taxes, but it also assures the services will be available for all citizens when they are needed.

CAPITALIST ALTERNATIVES

Some Americans are disturbed by the idea of adopting the "socialist" schemes of Scandinavian nations to meet the needs for human services in our country. They consider such methods alien to our basic principles of capitalism and private initiative. As a result, a number of "capitalist" alternatives have been conceived. One of the most interesting is the "national inheritance" plan proposed by David Hackett Fischer.

Fischer has suggested that it would be possible, at the time of a child's birth, for the federal government to place a "gift of capital" in the child's name in a long-term high-interest-bearing savings account or in government securities. By law this sum of money and interest it accrues could never be withdrawn or used in any way until retirement age. At age sixty-five an individual could retire and begin to receive the annual interest on the account as a pension. At the time of the person's death, both the principal and accrued interest would revert to the government to finance national inheritances for other children "yet to be born."

Fischer has estimated that if $4400 were placed in an account bearing an average six per cent interest for sixty-five years, the amount would grow to $200,000 by the time of retirement. The retired person could then draw an income of more than $12,000 annually. For a husband and wife, the combined non-taxable income would be more than $25,000 per year.[13]

The major disadvantage of the plan is that, at first, it would be necessary to finance both Social Security and the national inheritance system. However, this would not be so expensive as to be unfeasible. To provide a national inheritance of $4400 for each of the three million children born in 1975 would have cost $13.2 billion.[14] By comparison, the United States was spending $100 billion for social insurance in 1974, including $60 billion for Social Security alone. Of course, those who benefited from the national inheritance plan would be ineligible for Social Security, and Social Security would gradually be phased out as people began to retire under the new arrangement.

The national inheritance plan would have several advantages. It would be a "capitalist" arrangement. That is, the money would go into private banks or government securities and used as capital for investment purposes. Since the money would be handled by the banks, there would be no need for the huge bureaucracy of the Social Security

Administration. Necessary safeguards in terms of bank policies and procedures could probably be handled under existing bank inspection mechanisms. Another important bonus would be that older Americans could retire with a comfortable income and not feel dependent on either the government or their offspring.

THE FUTURE OF AGE RELATIONS

Many farsighted people feel that the increasing older population will come to be looked upon more and more as a burden by younger generations. This idea surfaces in some futuristic novels, such as *Logan's Run*, which became a popular motion picture and a television series. In this novel, geronticide is used as an expedient method of disposing of excess older people.[15] The same general idea is presented more forcefully in the novel, *They*, by Marya Mannes.[16] "They" refers to the younger generation which has rebelled and taken control of society. Believing that older people represent resistance to change and progress, "They" have segregated all people over fifty years old in isolated communities. Segregation is used in the belief that the psychological effects of being cut off from society will bring an early death, thus sparing society the burden of caring for its older unwanted members. In most instances this proves true. For those who do not die from isolation and loneliness, the society provides more drastic solutions when elders reach their sixties. At age sixty, all survivors have to submit to a computer checkup. Anyone found suffering from a mental or physical condition is painlessly eliminated. Those continuing in good health are given the choice of suicide or compulsory liquidation at age sixty-five.

While *Logan's Run* and *They* present extreme views of a dismal future for age relations, the idea of a general decline in age relations is also expressed by scholars in the field, such as Robert Clark of North Carolina State University and Joseph Spengler of Duke University. They warned:

> Increase in life expectancy in the middle and advanced years is likely to increase intergenerational conflicts unless the economy becomes much more flexible and competitive than it is and thus becomes more favorable to high employment at all age levels. On the one hand, given the prospect of a very slowly growing or nearly stationary population, opportunities for the advancement of younger persons into positions occupied by older persons--positions whose number does not increase as in a growing population--will be very limited. Meanwhile withdrawal from preferred posts owing to aging or health conditions will proceed slowly. After all, of each 1,000 whites who enter the labor force at age twenty, 934 or more will remain alive at age fifty and 850 or more at age sixty. Upward movement through the occupational structure will be at a much lower rate than in a population both growing and characterized by a lower life expectancy. The

> resulting slowness with which opportunities develop for younger persons will thus be conducive to intergenerational conflict.[17]

Clark and Spengler did add, however, that bringing inflation under control and providing adequate retirement incomes would encourage earlier retirement, thus opening up more opportunities for advancement by the young and reducing intergenerational tension. Their point was echoed by Fischer:

> ...If age and youth are to coexist without oppression, then neither youth nor age must be economically dependent upon the other. In early America, youth was kept in a condition of prolonged economic dependency upon age; in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, age became economically dependent upon youth. Prevailing attitudes toward age and youth were anchored in those material realities, without being caused by them.[18]

One of the main arguments for plans like Fischer's national inheritance proposal is that retirees would not be dependent on their children or on the indirect support of younger workers through tax-financed government programs.

In 1975, a conference was held in New Jersey to consider the question, "What will it be like to be old in the year 2025?" Among those taking part were such highly respected gerontologists as Bernice Neugarten and Eric Pfeiffer. While they recognized that there may be some rough periods of adjustment as society moves toward the twenty-first century, they rejected the idea of a "doomsday" ahead and anticipated a bright future for the elderly and for relations between age groups--a "society in which the elderly are fused into the mainstream of everyday life."[19]

David Hackett Fischer agreed with experts in the field of aging that a bright future is possible, but he also cautioned that social planners needed historical perspective as they set out to build a brighter tomorrow.

> Now, in the late twentieth century, a...[new] period may be beginning in the history of age relations. Many people are working to make it so. Scholars, politicians, social planners, and elderly Americans themselves are actively seeking to create better conditions for old age. They are often experts on the chosen subject, but they have not studied its history, and the absence of historical perspective on any problem makes a major difference in the way it is understood. Commonly, specialists in the social problem of old age seek to reverse the errors of the recent past, which so often made social victims of the aged. But if we take a longer view, we discover that reversal is not perhaps the best of remedies. If modern America made a cult of youth and victims of the aged, early America made a cult of age and a victim of the young. Before we try to turn the recent

past upon its head, we might take a more extended view of our historical experience.

To do so is to discover a different sort of purpose. If we wish to work toward a new model of age relationships, then surely it should be a world without *gerontophobia* on the one hand or *gerontophilia* on the other. It might be built upon an ideal of *gerontophratria* instead--a fraternity of age and youth, a brotherhood of generations. It should be a world in which the deep eternal differences between age and youth are recognized and respected without being organized into a system of social inequality.

It is in our power to create such a synthesis of our own historical experience--a system of age relations in which youth is not oppressed by age, as often it was in early America; and age is not oppressed by youth, as sometimes it is in the modern world. Such an opportunity has come to us today...for the momentum of modern history is moving powerfully in the right direction. We must add only an act of our collective will.[20]

Fischer's vision of the future is echoed by the noted gerontologist, Bernice Neugarten, who believes we are beginning to form an "age-irrelevant" society in which age will no longer be a hindrance to participation in any aspect of American life.

THE BRIDGE PROJECT

The possibilities for a future society in which age is no longer a barrier between generations was the basis for an experiment conducted at Fairhaven College in Bellingham, Washington. The "Bridge Project" was begun in 1973 under a federal grant which provided financial support to senior citizens who wished to attend the college and participate in classes with young people. The following article describes what happened in Fairhaven's experiment with "senior freshmen."

Case 12. The Bridgers

When the oldsters first arrived on the Fairhaven campus, both they and the students wondered if having older people on campus would mean restrictions for them, and the seniors were a bit edgy about how they would be received by the young people. Uncertainty soon disappeared. The students found that they could continue to live the way they had been living and that the older people were not apostles of yesteryear seeking to reform them. The older people likewise were relieved to find the students friendly and polite and respectful of their attitudes and viewpoints.

And so the adventurous senior citizens and the college students pursue their own life styles in neighboring dormitories in harmony, if not union, and each with a fondness for the other. The young students call the older people Bridgers, and their remodeled dormitory the Bridge House. Bridgers and college students attend classes together and eat together and discuss everything from house plants to religion.

This is not to imply that the blending of young and old occurred without certain attendant jars and jolts. Tiny eighty-one-year-old Mary Yotter recalls her first class in the new math at Fairhaven. "Well," she says, "I just never saw such a thing. I walked in late. The students were all over the floor, lying on their stomachs, on their backs, and every which way. I learned afterward that the fellow who was sitting in a chair leading the class wasn't the teacher. The teacher was down on the floor with the other students. This was a whole new world for me."

Approximately half of all the participants in the Bridge Project hold a bachelor's degree, but for the others the Bridge is their first experience with college. Since Bridgers have the choice of attending classes on a credit or noncredit basis, Bridger Alice Heggen had a chance to finish the course requirements for her bachelor's degree, which she started in 1928. And Fairhaven helped Martha Bishop, a retired licensed vocational nurse, and Dorothy Anderson, a housewife, earn their high school certificates.

...Interaction between the generations usually begins in the classroom. A recent course on the history and culture of the Appalachian Mountain region proved to be a particularly effective icebreaker. Bridgers almost immediately entered the spirit of the subject, showing the younger students how to garden, make soap, bake bread, quilt, hook rugs, and raise and slaughter a pig. They even discussed the art of making corn "likker," but refrained from demonstration. The Bridgers' age does not necessarily cast them in the role of instructors as it did in this instance. During this same study of Appalachia, in a group restoring a log cabin near the campus, the young and old worked and learned together as they did in many other projects...

One of the students' chief concerns at the outset of The Bridge Project was that the older people would be hypercritical of them and look askance at some of the things they did. Most students have since rejected that concern as groundless. One young woman who lives in a collective house with seven other people says, "The older people aren't arbitrary. Their attitude is, 'I don't know that I agree

with you on everything you do. But I am willing to listen to you and to consider the merits of what you say.'"

Like many of their generation, the Bridgers generally had little firsthand experience with the culture of today's youth. In their circles, "hippy" would be the word used to describe the appearance of the typical Fairhaven student. They've revised their attitudes, however. Now the Bridgers say that for college students, old jeans are practical for sitting on the floor, and back packs are sensible for carrying the numerous books needed for a day's classes -- and long hair and beards are not only fashionable but also cheap. One octogenarian says, "This has been a real education for me. I've learned to accept the modern mode of dress and hair style. Before, hair and jeans meant 'hippies,' a term I used as a sort of unthinking blanket denunciation. But now I know that beneath the whiskers and long hair there will be a delightful person."

The students regard The Bridge Project as good for Fairhaven and good for them personally. Some mention that the Bridgers have given them a broader perspective of themselves, that they have been helped by knowing that these older people have gone through some of the same experiences that they are now going through. Other students mention that they no longer think of people over the age of sixty as "conservative and hard of hearing." Says one young man, "Now when I see old people on the bus, I'm more comfortable and ready to talk to them. I feel I might have something in common with them."

The Bridgers too regard their participation in the project as a valuable learning experience. For some, the more important learning is academic; for others, it is one of personal relationships. Connie Miller, a retired medical secretary, leans toward the latter persuasion. "So many of us," she says, "were so busy living day to day during the years of raising a family, we had little time for cultural activities. Those of us who worked saw the same people steadily for the last twenty years. At Fairhaven we meet a new group of people; we don't live in the past. We have a chance to grow. I think when we leave here, we will be prepared to continue to broaden our acquaintances and to be more understanding of young people and young ideas."[21]

The Bridge Project, of course, did not involve a true cross section of the public. It was a specialized situation involving a special group of people. But it does demonstrate the feasibility of young and old working and living together in harmony without domination or oppression by either.

PROLONGEVITY?

Although they are definitely in the minority, a number of respected scientists believe that it is only a matter of time, perhaps a rather short time, until it will be possible to slow down the aging process and vastly increase the maximum human life span. A few of the most *avant garde* believe that it will be possible to conquer death itself. Albert Rosenfeld has assembled a considerable body of information about these theories and the experimental research that is underway to test them. He has published his findings in a book entitled *Prolongevity* and in a variety of articles.[22]

The case for life extension lies in the theory that aging is genetically determined, that the end of life is built into the beginning. The theory holds that the body contains an "aging clock," or clocks, that causes us to become old in the same way that we all develop from egg to embryo, fetus, infant, adolescent, and so forth. If this is a genetic process, as they suspect, scientists supporting this theory see no reason why they could not learn to understand and control the process. Given sufficient resources to carry on the research, some scientists believe they could have the answers during the lifetimes of people now alive. According to Rosenfeld, results of this research would be readily available to the public.

> Prolonging life won't be complicated like getting hip-joint replacements, heart transplants, or kidney dialysis. There's no reason why it shouldn't be in the form of medications--drugs, hormones, injections--and as inexpensive and available as any other medication. Once any critical substance has been synthesized, it shouldn't take long to mass-produce it. ...They can create a new product, and once it *works*, once it's approved, they can quickly supply the entire population.[23]

Rosenfeld claims that with these new age control products it would be possible for a thirty-year-old person, for example, to remain thirty years old in general health and appearance. Age control drugs might also, to some extent, reverse the aging process in older people and help them to regain some of their youth.

With the possibility of living until 200 or 300, many questions arise. Who would want to live so long? What would happen to the economy? Would the population grow so large that it would outstrip the earth's resources or even its livable space? Would childbirth be a thing of the past? Could a marriage last that long? Would we get tired of being around, throw out the drugs and hormones, and let nature take over once again? When asked, "Who do you think will want to live longer?", Rosenfeld responded:

> That's hard to say. People differ a great deal on this topic. Some people say instantly, "Great, I'd love to live longer," while others say, "No, thanks." I really think that more people than not would want to live longer

if they understood that living longer didn't mean just getting older and older. Nobody is interested in increasing the years of senility, but increasing the good years--years full of health and vigor and the possession of one's faculties. I think that most people, given the option, would choose to keep enjoying life. After all, we now spend many millions of dollars every year encouraging the medical establishment to keep us going for another year and another year and another year, and the quality of those extra years is not all that high. ...I'm sure there will still be people who won't want to live longer, and the assumption is that those who don't want to, will have the option of saying "No."[24]

ACHIEVING OLD AGE

People will frequently gauge their own chances for long life by noting the ages at death of their parents, grandparents and ancestors. Long-lived people do tend to produce long-lived offspring, but there is no certainty in individual cases. In terms of longevity, most of us come from mixed ancestry, and any of us can find ourselves in the situation of the proverbial ninety-year-old hospital patient who lamented, "If I'd known I was going to live so long, I'd have taken better care of myself."

Miracle drugs to hold back Father Time may or may not become available. If we are willing to settle for longevity instead of immortality in the flesh, there are a number of steps we can take to make the most of whatever our body's aging clock will allow. People who have studied those few cultures with high numbers of centenarians have not been able to determine the reasons for their long and active lives, even whether it is principally a matter of biology or culture. There are commonalities among centenarians, whether from the Caucasus region of Russia, the Hunza Valley of Pakistan, or Vilacabamba in Ecuador. The long-lived people get plenty of exercise, practice moderation in diet and other habits, and maintain an active interest in life.[25] In general their findings match the recommendations of Robert Butler, Director of the National Institute on Aging and author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *Why Survive? Being Old in America*. According to Dr. Butler, successful aging is definitely an achievement, not an accident.

> The crucial thing...is an investment in life, whether involving oneself or others. People who become unmotivated, bored with themselves and others--they are the ones who get in trouble.
>
> Prudential Life used to have a slogan, "The future belongs to those who prepare for it." That had to do

with life insurance and it sounds corny, but it is a sensible notion.

You have to prepare through years of decent diet, exercise, learning self-care, being intellectually and socially involved. You have got to keep your head and personality alive. Physical fitness. Personal fitness. Social fitness. It is the work of a lifetime. You can't suddenly find out at sixty or seventy what some of the important elements of health care are.

In my thinking about this, I go back to Aristotle and Aristotelian moderation. Too much or too little doesn't make much sense.

I stress personal and social fitness and the advantage people have who have maintained some kind of continuing connection with life. Intellectual curiosity and a continuing effort to learn are life-enhancing and associated with increased likelihood of survival.

When I speak of the importance of social activity for older people, I do not mean that the loner should despair. We must not try to make everybody conform. There are different routes to happiness.

Some people are loners, live private lives, are introspective, like to be by themselves. They can do well, too. It comes down to a question of character, motivation, the underlying investment in life, the emotional investment in life.

Nor when I talk about intellectual curiosity and a continuing attempt to learn do I mean that to be happy an older person has to be a great scholar. Happiness is available to someone who likes to work in a garden, to sew, to look at paintings, to take walks. This investment in life is what counts...

None of us knows...whether we have already had the best years of our lives or whether the best are yet to come. But the greatest of human possibilities remain to the very end of life--the possibilities for love and feeling, reconciliation and resolution...

After one has lived a life of meaning,...death may lose much of its terror. For what we fear most is not really death but a meaningless and absurd life...

It is easy to talk about the dignity of later years but you have to flesh out that dignity. Self-reliance,

pleasure, meaning can't suddenly be invented at sixty. It takes a lifetime of preparation.[26]

Every year thousands of tourists visit the Muir Woods, a 424-acre national monument just north of San Francisco. What they go to see is old, wrinkled, and beautiful, the giant redwood tree. These trees, some more than a thousand years old, stand as tall as twenty-five story buildings and make everything around them seem small and insignificant, including the tourists. Visiting the Muir Woods is like entering a beautiful cathedral. Automatically people walk quietly, lower their voices, and just stand in awe of the beauty that surrounds them. Why is it that these magnificent trees have achieved old age and dignity while other trees have withered and died? Perhaps in the redwood forest nature holds a lesson for us.

A redwood, like any other tree, begins its life as a seedling. Within that seed is the potential for whatever the tree may eventually become. But whether it dies in infancy, lives to become a twisted and deformed sapling, or matures into a tall and beautiful giant will not depend just on what lies within the seed. It will also depend on the kind of environment in which the seedling grows. In order to mature properly, it will need nutrients from the soil, sufficient sunlight and moisture, and protection from calamities such as fires.

As with trees, successful aging is an individual and personal accomplishment that depends on what lies within. But it is also a social achievement. Personal potential is not likely to be fulfilled if the social environment stands in the way or fails to provide the support the individual needs. Failure to reach one's potential may be the failure of the individual or of society, but successful aging is the achievement of both. What makes people and society different from trees is that they have choices; they do not have to "let nature take its course." When individuals and society work together, people, like trees, can be old and wrinkled...and beautiful.

MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT LONGEVITY AND THE FUTURE

MYTH: Only recently did the birthrate of the United States begin to decline.

FACT: The birthrate in the United States has been in almost constant decline throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and consequently the average age of Americans has been steadily rising since the early nineteenth century. The "baby boom" of the 1940s and 1950s was an exception to the general pattern of the past one-and-one-half centuries.

MYTH: The rapid growth of the elderly population is a phenomenon unique to the United States and a few other highly developed countries.

FACT: All major areas of the world, no matter how primitive or advanced, are experiencing rising populations of older people. Aging world population is now being recognized as a global issue, and international efforts are beginning to develop to deal with it.

MYTH: The need to provide services for a rising population of older people creates a special burden on society.

FACT: In some poor undeveloped countries where birthrates are high, the improvement of nutrition and health services has led to rapidly rising populations of both young and old. These societies are hard-pressed to meet the needs of both groups. The increasing demand for services to the elderly in the United States, however, is being offset by a relative decline in some services to the young. (For example, declining school populations reduce school costs.) In any case, providing services to the elderly should be no great burden to a country as wealthy as the United States once the right priorities are established. Some highly developed countries, such as the Scandanavian countries, provide considerably more in services to older citizens than the United States. In spite of its wealth, the United States is hardly a leader in the field.

MYTH: Providing services to the elderly at public expense leads to socialism.

FACT: No country has ever become socialistic by simply using public funds to meet the legitimate needs of its citizens. The United States has been constantly expanding social services since the early twentieth century, yet private ownership of property, capital investment, profits and a competitive economy continue to flourish. Many older Americans spent their working lives earning only enough to survive and could save little for retirement. Those who did save found their savings vastly depleted by inflation over which they had no control. Meeting the needs of these people is a responsibility which can be met without resorting to socialism.

MYTH: Although people may individually add years to their lives by taking care of themselves, there is no way that science can actually slow down the aging process or significantly increase the life span.

FACT: Many respected scientists now believe that it will be possible to retard aging and greatly increase the life span, and some scientists believe that this will be accomplished in the near future. Successful experiments have already been conducted with laboratory animals. There seems to be a strong likelihood that, given sufficient resources, these experiments can eventually be extended to human beings.

ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

1. Students can make a study of changing age distributions in their own community over a period of time. Resources for doing this vary from one locale to another, because states, counties and local communities differ considerably in their methods of collecting and recording age-related data. The best way to begin is by contacting the appropriate local official, such as the town or city clerk, and asking for assistance. Administrative offices for the school district may be able to provide good data for pre-school and school-age population. Organize the data in the form of age-sex pyramids similar to those included in this chapter, and draw them on newsprint or transparencies for use in the classroom. Use the charts as a basis for discussing changes in the community's age structure and the impact on needs for services.

2. Explain the concept of "cohort factors" to students (the idea that each generation has certain attitudes, values, and beliefs that it carries along with it as it ages). Discuss what the class considers to be true cohort factors, as opposed to passing fads and fashions, that will characterize their own generation as it grows older. To get discussion started, you might begin by brainstorming a list of opposing characteristics, such as:

   politically active--politically apathetic
   tolerant--intolerant
   thrifty-free spending
   energetic--lazy
   conservative--progressive

   When an extensive list has been compiled, discuss which characteristics are most descriptive of their own generation's cohort factors. To generate discussion, collect and read papers anonymously trying to identify common themes.

3. Have the class read an article describing the theoretical research that could lead to a greatly prolonged life span. (The chapter notes and Recommended Readings include appropriate articles.) Ask the class, "How many would choose to live to the age of 200 if it were possible to still maintain good physical and mental health?" Put all those who answer "yes" in one group and those who answer "no" in another. Students who are undecided should be allowed to join either group to listen to the discussion. Each group should discuss and list reasons for their choice, then choose their five best reasons, numbering them from "strongest" to "weakest." Then bring the class back together. Have one group announce and explain its strongest reason. Allow several minutes for debate of this one point and then allow the other group to offer its best point. Undecided students should not participate. Continue to alternate until all points have been discussed. When all the points have been debated, ask each of those who could not decide at the beginning whether he or she has reached a decision and why. Ask whether any students who decided at the beginning have changed their minds as the debate proceeded, or at least realized that there were some significant factors they had not considered earlier.

4. The above activity might be extended by inviting some older people into the classroom, preferably a group representing different ages, to discuss the same question with the class.

5. Assign students to conduct a survey of all people of all ages in the community, asking two questions:

   If you could maintain good physical and mental health, would you want to live to the age 200? (Offer these choices: "yes," "no," "not sure.")

   Why?

   Students conducting the survey should note each response on a separate sheet of paper and mark each response as coming from a child, teenager, young adult, middle-aged person or an elderly person. Sort the results by age categories. Divide the class into five groups and have each group compile the results of one of the five age categories. Ask each group to report to the class on the results for that age category. Discuss with the class whether there seem to be any significant differences in the desire for prolonged life according to the age of the person asked. Discuss also whether different age groups express different kinds of desires or concerns when they consider the possibility of living a long time.

USEFUL TERMS FOR STUDENTS TO KNOW

AGE DISTRIBUTION: The proportions of people within a population by age

BIRTHRATE: The number of births per thousand people per year

DEATH RATE: The number of deaths per thousand people per year

DEMOGRAPHY: The study of population and population trends

DEPENDENCY RATIO: The ratio of people who are mainly producers of goods and services to people who are mainly consumers of goods and services

GENETICS: The study of biological heredity, the process by which hereditary characteristics are transmitted from one generation to another within a species

LIFE CYCLE: The pattern of life from birth to death

LONGEVITY: Length of life

ZERO POPULATION GROWTH (ZPG): The balance of birth and death rates resulting in a stable population

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This book is designed to assist "a young adult in gaining awareness in the world of the older adult," in order to close the gap between generations (Grades 7-12).

Jacobs, H. Lee. YOUTH LOOKS AT AGING, Institute of Gerontology, University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA 52240, 1969.

A short textbook for secondary students to introduce them to various topics of aging and dispel myths and misinformation. Some suggestions for activity and discussion might be used at lower grade levels.

Jantz, Richard K., Carol Seefeldt, Alice Galper, and Kathy Serock. CURRICULUM GUIDE: CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES TOWARD THE ELDERLY, Department of Early Childhood/Elementary Education, College of Education, together with Center on Aging, Division of Human and Community Resources, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742, 1976.

This guide for use with children ages 3-11 includes reasons for developing positive attitudes in children toward aging. Specific goals and activities are included along with teacher resources.

_____. LEARNING ABOUT AGING, The National Retired Teachers Association and the American Association of Retired Persons, 1909 K St., N.W., Washington, DC 20049, 1981.

This bibliography contains 120 book and thirty-three audiovisual entries all annotated for use on the secondary school level.

_____. LIVING WITH AGING, Documentary Photo Aids, P.O. Box 956, Mount Dora, FL 32757, 1977.

A set of twenty-eight photo aids, 11"x 14". Through live photographs and cartoons, presents the problems of the elderly in society. Teacher's guide included.

Paranya, Ann C. UNIT ON AGING, ED 098 125. Available from EDRS, Computer Microfilm International Corporation, Box 190, Arlington, VA 22210.

A unit for secondary school students which includes topics dealing with awareness of aging, problems of old age, changes needed and relationships between older people and others. Reference list and bibliography included.

Pratt, Francis E. TEACHING ABOUT AGING, Social Science Education Consortium, 855 Broadway, Boulder, CO 80302, 1977.

Information on the need for aging education as well as materials and activities for classroom use. Primarily for secondary level, but includes suggestions for elementary grades.

_____. PROJECT CLASP (Children Learning About Aging in a Structured Program): An Intergenerational Approach to Aging Education for Grades 4-8, Project CLASP, Rockland Public Schools, Rockland, MA 02370, 1980.

A curriculum guide designed to use aging as the theme for teaching basic skills in the classroom. Materials, including worksheets, are divided up by grade levels.

Saxe, Adele R. A MANUAL TO ASSIST IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF COURSES ON TEACHING ABOUT AGING, Gerontology Education and Training Center, School of Applied Science and Arts, San Jose State University, San Jose, CA 95192, 1977.

Provides suggestions for curriculum design and activities for the classroom at all grade levels, K-12.

Scribner, Evelyn. A CASEBOOK OF PROBLEMS OF THE AGED, J. Weston Walch, Publishers, Portland, ME 04104, 1978.

A collection of nineteen case studies, each focusing on a problem common to elderly people. Discussion questions and follow-up activities included (Grades 7-12).

Storck, Patricia A. and Barbara K. Davies. AGING: A KINDERGARTEN CURRICULUM, ED 144 680, Available from EDRS, Computer Microfilm International Corporation, Box 190, Arlington, VA 22210.

Guidelines for involving older people in activities with children in the kindergarten classroom. Suggestions for orienting both groups prior to interaction.

_____. TEACHING ABOUT AGING, Center for Teaching International Relations, Graduate School of International Studies, University of Denver, Denver, CO 80210.

A study guide for examining preconceptions of aging as well as our behavior toward the elderly. Handouts for student activities included (Grades 7-12).

_____. TEACHING AIDS FOR THE OVERHEAD PROJECTOR, General Media Corporation, P.O. Box 280, Monmouth, OR 97361.

Transparencies for the Overhead Projector - Age Related:

#7423 - US Population by Age & Sex, Selected Years 1970-1985
7425 - US Population by Age Groups, 1900-2000
7426 - Percent Distribution of US Population by Age Groups 1900-2000
8437 - Births and Deaths in the US, 1910-1970
7438 - Birth Rate and Death Rate in the US, 1910-1970
7458 - US Labor Force by Age Group, Sex and Race, 1960, 1970, 1980
7461 - Unemployment in the US by Sex and Age Group, 1950-1970
7462 - Unemployment Rates by Sex and Age Group, 1950-1970
103 - Age of the Indian Population by Sex, 1970

_____. TRUTH ABOUT AGING: GUIDELINES FOR PUBLISHERS, National Retired Teachers Association, 1909 K Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20049, 1979.

This booklet suggests ways to detect "ageism," a form of discrimination which limits people simply because of age. Intended for publishers, but useful to teachers and librarians.

_____. YES, BUT NOT HERE, The Macmillan Company, 866 Third Ave., New York, NY 10022, 1971.

This simulation game confronts students with decision making concerning the care and housing of elderly citizens in a suburban community. Game is designed for thirty-two players. Twelve booklets, a teacher's manual and map are included (Grade 7-adult).

III. AUDIO-VISUAL MATERIALS

AMERICA'S AGED: THE FORGOTTEN MANY, Current Affairs Films, 527 Madison Ave., Box 72, New York, NY 10022, 1975.

A color sound-filmstrip with cassette and teacher's guide. Deals with problems of the elderly in American society, reasons for the problems and possibilities for the future (Grades 7-12).

ANNIE AND THE OLD ONE, based on the book by Miska Miles, Newbery Award Records, Inc., 342 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10017, 1976.

Two color sound filmstrips dealing with the death of an elderly Navajo grandmother and her relationship to her granddaughter. Background information included. 15 mins. (Grades 4-6)

ARTHUR AND LILLIE, Pyramid Films, Box 1048, Santa Monica, CA 90406, 1976.

An award-winning documentary about film industry veteran Arthur Mayer and his wife, still both creative and active. 30 mins. (Senior high to adult)

THE EIGHT STAGES OF HUMAN LIFE, Human Relations Media, Pleasantville, NY 10570.

A two-part series - Prenatal to Late Childhood and Adolescence to Old Age based on Erik Erikson's eight stages of human development. A Broad perspective on each stage is presented including physical and mental changes. Kit includes eight filmstrips and teacher's guide. (Grades 9-12)

THE ENDING, Schloat Productions, A Prentice-Hall Company, 150 White Plains Rd., Tarrytown, NY 10591, 1973.

A color sound filmstrip available with either record or cassette. The story centers on a young girl who takes time to help an old man home on a hot day and comes face to face with issues of the elderly (Grades 9-12).

FOOD TO LIVE ON: NUTRITION FROM THE TWENTIES THROUGH THE NINETIES, Tupperware Educational Services, P.O. Box 2353, Orlando, FL 32802, 1979.

A three-filmstrip series defining nutritional needs through the years. Teacher guides included. (Grades 7-12)

GENERATIONS, Phoenix Films, 470 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016, 1979.

This film without narration presents an encounter between an elderly man and young boy who develop a relationship of trust and understanding. 11 mins. (Grade 4 to adult)

GROWING OLDER: CONCEPTS IN FOCUS, Butterick Publishing, 708 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, 1980.

A color sound filmstrip using a documentary-style approach to the aged in our society. Kit includes a teacher's guide, wall chart and spirit masters for student activities (Grades 4-6).

GROWING UP - GROWING OLDER, Association Films, Inc., National Booking Office, 866 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10022.

This free-loan film series includes three film vignettes suitable for ages nine through eleven. The aim of these dramatizations is to show friendships between young and old. Support materials and spirit masters for student activities are included. 15 mins. each.

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE OLD? Guidance Associates, 757 Third Ave., New York, NY 10017, 1973.

Two color sound filmstrips. Part I deals with problems of the elderly in society. Part II illustrates the "creativity and vigor which can mark later years" (Grades 7-12).

IT'S OK TO BE OLD: APPROACHES TO AGING, Sunburst Communications, Inc., Pleasantville, NY 10570, 1980.

A three-part sound filmstrip designed to increase understanding of the elderly and to increase communication between generations. Teacher's guide included (Grades 7-12).

Keown, Gail M. and Ruth N. Klippstein. CONCERNS OF THE AGING: NUTRITION AND HEALTH RELATED STATISTICAL DATA, Division of Nutritional Sciences, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, 1976.

A slide set featuring statistics and information on social, economic and health concerns of the elderly. Guide included (Senior high to adult).

Keown, Gail M. and Ruth N. Klippstein. POSITIVE LIVING IN THE SENIOR YEARS, Division of Nutritional Sciences, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, 1976.

This slide program begins with an overview on aging and then moves into the nutritional needs of the elderly. Script-guide included (Senior high to adult).

LUTHER METKE AT 94, Northwest Cultural Films, 85895 Lorane Highway, Eugene, OR 97405, 1981.

Poet, folk philosopher and builder of log cabins, Luther, a survivor of the Spanish-American War, documents on film how he has remained actively involved with the world around him. 27 mins. (Grades 7-adult)

MAGGIE KUHN: WRINKLED RADICAL, Indiana University, Audio Visual Center, Bloomington, IN 47401, 1977.

In this film interview conducted by Studs Terkel, Maggie Kuhn, the Gray Panther leader, is shown leading the struggle for the rights of the elderly. 17 mins. (Senior high to adult)

MY GRANDSON LEW, Barr Films, Box 5667, Pasadena, CA 91107, 1976.

Based on the book by Charlotte Zolotow, this sensitive film tells of a young boy recalling his grandfather's kindnesses. By sharing his memories with his mother, they seem to bring the old man back. 13 mins. (Elementary grades)

NAHANNI, National Film Board of Canada, P.O. Box 6100, Station A, Montreal, Quebec, H3C 3H5, 1962.

Filmed in Canada's Northwest Territory, this documentary chronicles the amazing feats of Albert Faille, still searching for gold at the age of seventy-three. 19 mins. (Grade 7-adult)

Neiswender, Margaret E., compiler. ABOUT AGING: A CATALOG OF FILMS, Ethel Percy Andrus Gerontology Center, University of Southern California, University Park, Los Angeles, CA 90007, 1979.

Contains descriptions of scores of 16mm films, videocassettes and other audio-visual materials with subject index. Provides full information for purchase and rental.

THE OLDER SCHOOL VOLUNTEER, National School Volunteer Program, Inc., Department OSV, 300 North Washington Street, Alexandria, VA 22314.

Film shows the many opportunities for older volunteers within the school system. It also demonstrates how these people can enrich the learning environment.

OUR ELDERS: A GENERATION NEGLECTED, Prentice-Hall Media, ServCode HB 26, 150 White Plains Rd., Tarrytown, NY 10591, 1972.

Two color sound filmstrips by the Associated Press complete with teacher's guide. Examines the problems of the elderly from the standpoint of American attitudes and values (Grades 7-12).

RUTH STOUT'S GARDEN, Arthur Mokin Productions, Inc., 17 West 60th Street, New York, NY 10023, 1975.

A self-reliant ninety-year-old describes on film her "no dig/no work" garden as well as her independent life going back to marching in temperance crusades as a teenager. 23 mins. (Senior high to adult).

THE SHOPPING BAG LADY, Learning Corporation of America, 1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10019, 1975.

A film encounter between a teenage girl and an elderly "shopping bag lady" helps the young girl reexamine her relationship with her grandmother and begin to confront her own destiny as a person who will grow old. 21 mins. (Grade 7 to adult)

THE SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM, Prentice-Hall Media, 150 White Plains Rd., Tarrytown, NY 10591, 1979.

Two color sound filmstrips by the Associated Press complete with teacher's guide and a Learning Activity Packet. Examines the origin and goals of the system, as well as the problems of financing it now and in the future (Grades 7-12).

IV. ORGANIZATIONS

ADMINISTRATION ON AGING

HEW South Building, Room 3609
Third and C Streets, SW
Washington, DC 20201
(202) 655-4000

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED PERSONS and NATIONAL RETIRED TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

1909 K Street, NW
Washington, DC 20049
(202) 872-4700

THE CLEARINGHOUSE FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL AGING EDUCATION

Box 5112
Tennessee Technological University
Cookeville, TN 38501
(615) 528-4106 (TTU)

GRAY PANTHERS

3700 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104
(215) 387-0918

JEWISH ASSOCIATION FOR SERVICES FOR THE AGED

222 Park Avenue, South
New York, NY 10003
(212) 677-2530

NATIONAL CLEARINGHOUSE ON AGING

Office of Human Development
Administration on Aging
Washington, DC 20201
(202) 245-0724

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF SENIOR CITIZENS

1911 K Street, NW
Room 202
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 783-6850

NATIONAL COUNCIL ON THE AGING
600 Maryland Ave., SW
West Wing 100
Washington, DC 20024
(202) 479-1200

RETIRED SENIOR VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

ACTION
806 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20525
(202) 655-4000